The Torah of Human Rights

Course Materials for the Halacha of Human Rights and the Aggadah of Human Rights



The Halacha of Human Rights (Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday)

In this course we will explore what Torah tradition can teach us about the religious meaning of the global struggle for human dignity and, even more importantly, how Torah can help make that struggle a success. We'll begin by placing the two major themes of the course, religious tradition and the global human rights movement, into the larger context of human evolution. Then, using the insights that we have gained, we will delve into Jewish sacred texts. We will uncover how the inspired vision of the Biblical prophets unfolded through Talmudic interpretation, and through Medieval theology and Kabbalah, until it emerged in religious Zionist thought as a powerful message about the *divine* significance of *human* dignity.

The Aggadah of Human Rights (Monday and Wednesday)

This course is a companion to the Halacha of Human Rights. **Both courses may be taken independently.** In this course, we will delve into the religious and mystical significance of realizing the human potential to manifest the Image of God. Achieving a higher humanity - a humanity that is wiser, more loving and more just than we are now - is the ultimate purpose of Torah and Mitsvot for many Jewish thinkers. We'll explore how higher humanity reveals the glory of God, and what spiritual practices may help achieve it, by studying the teachings of prophets, philosophers and Kabbalists from the past and in our day.



The Torah of Human Rights - Halacha and Aggadah

CY Summer Program 5774 - 2014

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For more information see www.humanrightstorah.org.

 by Shaiya Rothberg

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For Materials on Human Rights Theory and Praxis go to http://tinyurl.com/lpoa5bz (Conservative Yeshiva Online Learning)

וְאָשִׁיבָה שֹׁפְטַיִךְ כְּבָרִאשֹׁנָה
וְיֹעֲצַיִךְ כְּבַתְּחִלָּה
אַחֲרֵי כֵן יִקָּרֵא לָךְ
עִיר הַצֶּדֶק
קִרְיָה נֶאֱמָנָה:
צִיּוֹן בְּמִשְׁפָּט תִּפָּדֶה
וְשָׁבֶיהָ בִּצְדָקָה:

ישעיהו א: כו - כז

I will restore your judges as at the first,
and your counselors as at the beginning:
afterward you shall be called,
the City of Righteousness,
the Faithful City.
Zion shall be redeemed with judgment,
and those that return to her
with righteousness.

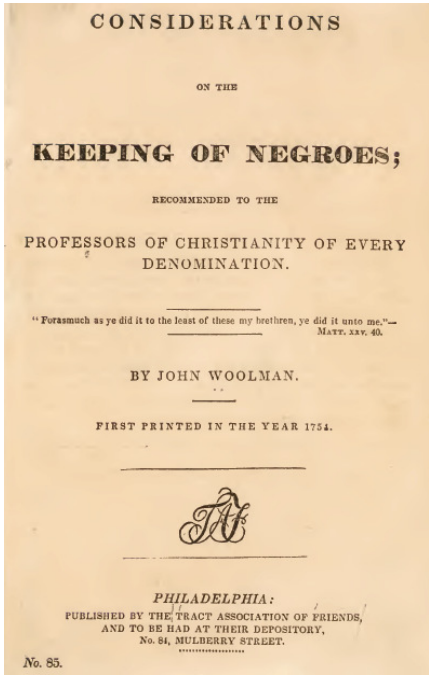
Isaiah 1:26-27

Class 1. The Conceptual Framework (Part One): Evolution, Religion and Human Rights

For a summary of the conceptual framework, see pg. 43.

Selections from "Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes" by John Woolman (1720-1772)

Bold not in original. Full text in multiple formats at the Internet Archive (archive.org).



CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

KEEPING OF NEGROES;

RECOMMENDED TO THE

PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY OF EVERY DENOMINATION.

"Forasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."—MATT. XXV. 40.

BY JOHN WOOLMAN.

FIRST PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1754.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY THE TRACT ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS,
AND TO BE HAD AT THEIR DEPOSITORY,
No. 84, MULBERRY STREET.

No. 85.

As many times there are different motives to the same action ; and one does that from a generous heart, which another does for selfish ends ; the like may be said in this case.

There are various circumstances among those that keep negroes, and different ways by which they fall under their care ; and I doubt not, there are many well disposed persons amongst them who desire rather to manage wisely and justly in this difficult matter, than to make gain of it.

But the general disadvantage which these poor negroes lie under in an enlightened Christian country, having often filled me with real sadness, I now think it my duty, through Divine aid, to offer some thoughts thereon to the consideration of others.

When we remember that all nations are of one blood, (Gen. 3:20) that in this world we are but sojourners, that we are subject to the like afflictions and infirmities of body, the like disorders and frailties in mind, the like temptations, the same death, and the same judgment, and that the all-wise Being is Judge and Lord over us all, it seems to raise an idea of general brotherhood, and a disposition easy to be touched with a feeling of each other's afflictions : but when we forget those things, and look chiefly at our outward circumstances, in this and some ages past, constantly retaining in our minds the distinction between us and them, with respect to our knowledge and improvement in things Divine, natural and artificial, our breasts being apt to be filled with fond notions of superiority, there is danger of erring in our conduct toward them.

We allow them to be of the same species with ourselves ; odds is, we are in a higher station, and enjoy greater favor than they. And when it is thus that our heavenly Father endoweth some of his children with distinguished gifts, they are intended for good ends ; but if those thus gifted are thereby lifted up above their brethren, not considering themselves as debtors to the weak, nor behaving themselves as faithful stewards, none who judge impartially can suppose them free from ingratitude.

When a people dwell under the liberal distribution of favours from heaven, it behoves them carefully to inspect their ways, and consider the purposes for which those favours are bestowed, lest, through forgetfulness of God and misusing his gifts, they incur his heavy displeasure, whose judgments are just and equal, who exalteth and humbleth to the dust, as he seeth meet.

[…]

To consider mankind otherwise than brethren, to think favours are peculiar to one nation, and to exclude others, plainly supposes a darkness in the understanding : for as God's love is universal, so where the mind is sufficiently influenced by it, it begets a likeness of itself, and the heart is enlarged towards all men…. […]

When self-love presides in our minds, our opinions are biassed in our own favour ; and in this condition, being concerned with a people so situated that they have no voice to plead their own cause, there is danger of using ourselves to an undisturbed partiality, until, by long custom, the mind becomes reconciled with it, and the judgment itself infected.

To apply humbly to God for wisdom, that we may thereby be enabled to see things as they are, and as they ought to be, is very needful. Hereby the hidden things of darkness may be brought to light, and the judgment made clear : we shall then consider mankind as brethren. Though different degrees and a variety of qualifications and abilities, one dependent on another, be admitted, yet high thoughts will be laid aside, and all men treated as becometh the sons of one father, agreeably to the doctrine of Christ Jesus.

"He hath laid down the best criterion, by which mankind ought to judge of their own conduct, and others judge for them of theirs, one towards another, viz. ' Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.' I **take it, that all men by nature are equally entitled to the equity of this rule, and under the indispensable obligations of it. One man ought not to look upon another man or society of men as so far beneath him that he should not put himself in their place, in all his actions towards them, and bring all to this test, viz. How should I approve of this conduct, were I in their circumstance, and they in mine ?" […]**



John Woolman (1720–1772) was an American merchant, tailor, journalist, and itinerant Quaker preacher, and an early abolitionist in the colonial era. Based in Mount Holly, New Jersey, he traveled through frontier areas to preach Quaker beliefs, and advocate against slavery and the slave trade, cruelty to animals, economic injustices and oppression, and conscription. In 1772, Woolman traveled to England, where he urged Quakers to support abolition of slavery. He died of smallpox. [Adapted from Wikipedia]

It may be objected that there is the cost of purchase, and risk of their lives to them who possess them, and therefore it is needful that they make the best use of their time. In a practice just and reasonable, such objections may have weight ; but if the work be wrong from the beginning, there is little or no force in them. If I purchase a man who has never forfeited his liberty, the natural right of freedom is in him ; and shall I keep him and his posterity in servitude and ignorance ? " How should I approve of this conduct, were I in his circumstances, and he in mine ?" It may be thought, that to treat them as we would willingly be treated, our gain by them would be inconsiderable : and it were, in divers respects, better that there were none in our country.

We may further consider, that they are now amongst us, and people of our nation were the cause of their being here ; that whatsoever difficulty accrues thereon, we are justly chargeable with, and to bear all inconveniences attending it with a serious and weighty concern of mind to do our duty by them, is the best we can do. To seek a remedy by continuing the oppression, because we have power to do it, and see others do it, will, I apprehend, not be doing as we would be done by. […]

It appears by experience, that where children are educated in fulness, ease, and idleness, evil habits are more prevalent than is common amongst such who are prudently employed in the necessary affairs of life. If children are not only educated in the way of so great temptation, but have also the opportunity of lording it over their fellow-creatures, and being masters of men in their childhood, how can we expect otherwise than that their tender minds will be possessed with thoughts too high for them ; which gaining strength by continuance, will prove like a slow current, gradually separating them from or keeping from acquaintance with that humility and meekness in which alone lasting happiness can be enjoyed.

Man is born to labour, and experience abundantly showeth, that it is for our good : but where the powerful lay the burden on the inferior, without affording a Christian education, and suitable

opportunity of improving the mind, and a treatment which we, in their case, should approve, in order that themselves may live at ease, and fare sumptuously, and lay up riches for their posterity; this seems to contradict the design of Providence, and, I doubt not, is sometimes the effect of a perverted mind ; for while the life of one is made grievous by the rigour of another, it entails misery on both. […]



Picture floating around Web. Sometimes labeled "Congo Free State, Slaves c 1905"

Respecting our progress in this land, the time is short since our beginning was small and number few, compared with the native inhabitants. He that sleeps not by day nor night, hath watched over us, and kept us as the apple of his eye. His Almighty arm hath been round about us, and saved us from dangers.

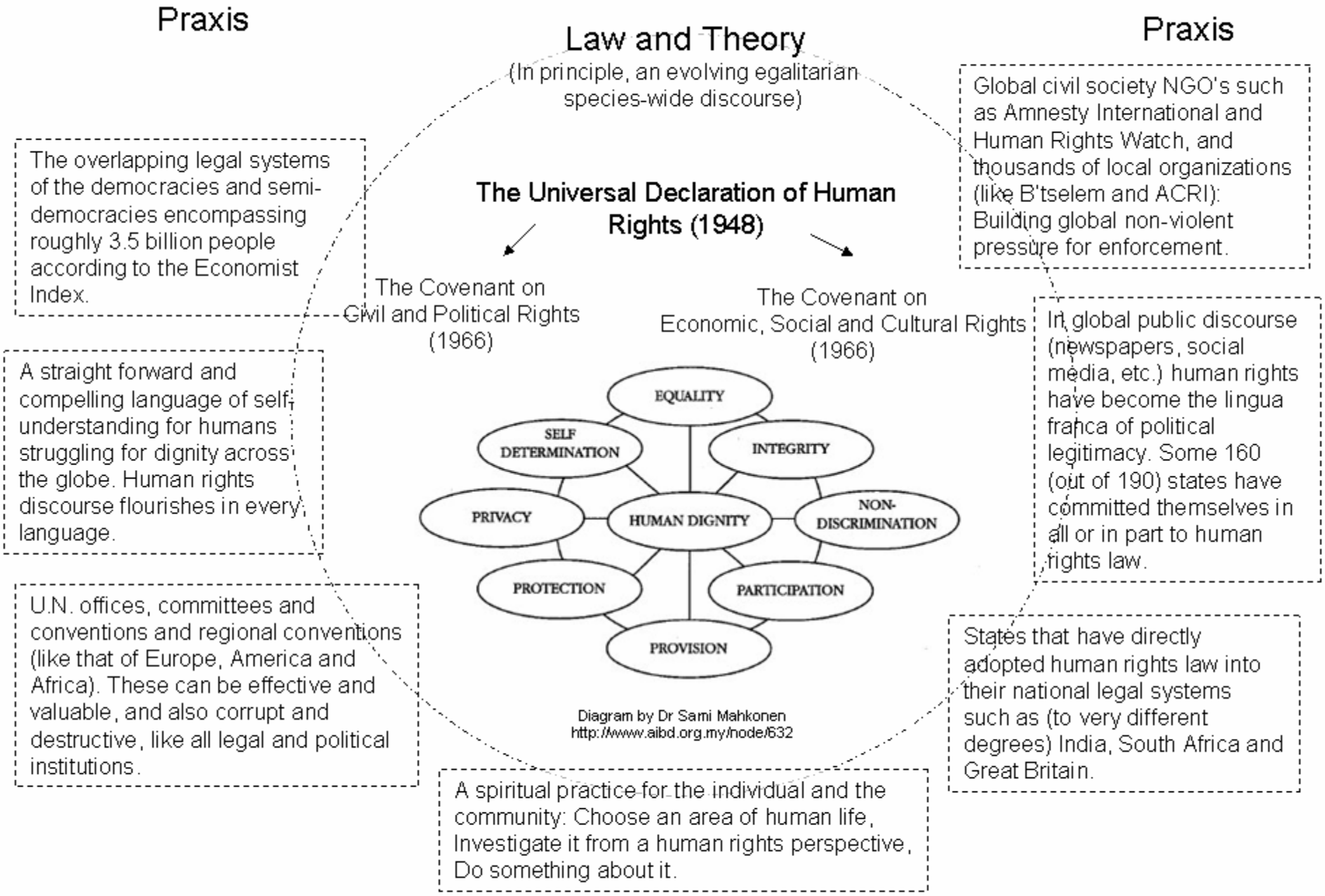
The wilderness and solitary deserts in which our fathers passed the days of their pilgrimage, are now turned into pleasant fields ; and while many parts of the world have groaned under the heavy calamities of war, our habitation remains quiet, and our land fruitful.

When we trace back the steps we have trodden, and see how the Lord hath opened a way in the wilderness for us…If we do not consider these things aright, but through a stupid indolence, conceive views of interest separate from the general good of the great brotherhood, and, in pursuance thereof, treat our inferiors with rigour, to increase our wealth and gain riches for our children; "What then shall we do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall we answer him ? did not he that made us, make them? and did not one fashion us?"

To our great Master we stand or fall, to judge or condemn us as is most suitable to his wisdom or authority ; my inclination is to persuade, and entreat, and simply give hints of my way of thinking.

[…]

THE END.



Human Rights as the Theory and Praxis of the Human Story.

Class 2 - The Conceptual Framework (Part Two): God, Torah and Human Rights

For a summary of Part Two of the conceptual framework, see pg. 58.

Section One: Kiryat Sh'ma

Selection from the Ency. Judaica (by Louis Jacobs)

SHEMA, READING OF, the twice daily recitation of the declaration of God's unity, called the *Shema* ("Hear") after the first word in Deuteronomy 6:4; also called *Keri'at Shema* ("the reading of the *Shema*"). As it had developed by at least as early as the second century C.E., the *Shema* consisted of three portions of the Pentateuch – Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Deuteronomy 11:13–21; and Numbers 15:37–41, in this order – together with the benedictions of the *Shema*...

Development of the Practice:

It is difficult to determine the stages through which this development took place. At a very early period the Deuteronomic injunction "And these words which I command thee this day … and thou shalt talk of them" (6:6–7 and 11:19) were understood as a commandment to read the *Shema*, perhaps in response to the challenge of Zoroastrian dualism, though as late as the third century C.E. some held the view that the duty of reciting the *Shema* is rabbinic and the verses refer not specifically to the *Shema* but to the "words of Torah" in general (Ber. 21a). The Nash papyrus [c. 150 B.C.E.] , dating from the Hasmonean period, contains the Ten Commandments and the first portion of the *Shema*.


מאימתי

From the Babylonian Talmud on Kiryat Sh'ma.

Points to Consider

- If Deuteronomy was written sometime during the seventh century B.C.E., how many years passed (according to this article) before the first evidence of the reciting of the three-paragraph "Kiryat Shema" that we know today?

Selections from Deuteronomy

דברים פרק ו

(ד) שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְקֹוָק אֶחָד׃ (ה) וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדֶךָ׃ (ו) וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם עַל לְבָבֶךָ׃ (ז) וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתֶךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמֶךָ׃ (ח) וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדֶךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֹטָפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ׃ (ט) וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזֹת בֵּיתֶךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ׃

Devarim 6

4Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. 6And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart: 7And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8And you shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 And you shall write them on the posts of your house, and on your gates.

Points to Consider

- What are "these words" mentioned in verse 6? What exactly does the text say you should do with them?

Mishnah and Talmud on Kiryat Sh'ma

משנה ברכות א:א

משנה. מאימתי קורין את שמע בערבית? - משעה שהכהנים נכנסים לאכול בתרומתן עד סוף האשמורה הראשונה, דברי רבי אליעזר. וחכמים אומרים: עד חצות. רבן גמליאל אומר: עד שיעלה עמוד השחר.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף ב עמוד א

גמרא. תנא היכא קאי דקתני מאימתי?!...תנא אקרא קאי, דכתיב +דברים ו'+ בשכבך ובקומך. והכי קתני: זמן קריאת שמע דשכיבה אימת - משעה שהכהנים נכנסין לאכול בתרומתן.

Mishnah Berachot 1:1

(1) From when are we to recite the *shema* in the evening? From the time when the priests return to each terumah, up until the end of the first watch. [*Priests who have become impure and have immersed themselves in a mikveh in order to purify themselves must wait until the stars have appeared in order to be considered ritually pure so that they can eat the "terumah", which is food that they must be ritually pure in order to eat. The night is divided into three "watches"*]. This is the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, but the Sages say, [One may recite the *shema*] until midnight. Rabban Gamliel says, Until dawn.

Translation based on http://www.emishnah.com/Berakhot.html (which is a very impressive Mishna study site, worthy checking out).

Talmud Bavli Berachot 2a (On the Mishnah quoted above)

Gemara. The sage who asked "when do we recite the shema", where is he standing?! [*that is to say, what is he talking about?! The Mishnah hasn't told us anything about an obligation to say the "shema", so why is it all of a sudden asking about when we should say it?*]…[The answer is] that the sage is 'standing' on the scripture which says, "when you lie down and when you get up", and he's asking, "in regard to saying the shema 'when you lie down', when is that exactly?"

Notes: Later on in the Mishnah, the question is asked "what blessing is said over fruit?" It is explained that for fruits of the tree, you say "blessed are [You O Lord our God who creates] the fruits of the tree". But the "Tosafot" (Ashkanazi Rabbis in the Middle Ages who wrote an influential commentary on the Babylonian Talmud) aren't satisfied. They want to know why the Talmud doesn't ask the same question it asked above, that is, "the sage - where is he standing?!" In other words, the Mishnah asks which blessing we say on fruit when it hasn't taught us ***that we say blessings at all****! This is just like above, where the Mishnah asks "when do we say the evening shema" even though it hasn't told us that we are obliged to say the shema at all! And so the Tosafot say: the Talmud*

should have asked, "the sage - where is he standing?" here, too. They want to know why the Talmud isn't consistent. Their explanation appears in the box below.

תוספות מסכת ברכות דף לה עמוד א

כיצד מברכין - לא שייך להקשות תנא היכא קאי דקתני כיצד כדפריך בריש מכילתין (ד' ב.) משום דהכא סברא הוא לברך כדמסיק בגמרא דאסור ליהנות מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה...

Tosafot Brachot 35a "Keitsad Mevarchin"

[The Mishnah says] "What blessing to do we say [on fruit]? It is not relevant here to question the Mishnah by saying, "the sage - where is he standing?!" like the Talmud did early on in this tractate (Brachot 2a) because here [the obligation to bless God before we eat] stands to reason [literally: is "s'vara"], as it is learned in the gemara, that it is forbidden to benefit from this world without blessing [God]…

Now let's see the comments of Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn on the comments of the Tosafot on the comments of the Talmud on the text of the Mishnah!

ר' חיים הירשנזון (המסדרונה, שנה א', חוברת א' אות לד, וחוברות ג-ד אות שי"ד ואות של"א).



Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn (1857-1935) was a scholar of Talmud and Jewish law, a theologian and an early religious-Zionist thinker. In thousands of pages of Biblical and Talmudic interpretation, halachic argumentation and theological explorations, he integrates modern insights about democracy, humanism and the sciences into the depth of Torah tradition. In "Class 7: Human Rights as the Law of God", we will explore his ideas about international law. Below, see his statement on the role of morality and reason in Jewish law.

"תנא אקרא קאי" - אין הכוונה על הקרא בלבד רק על כל הלכות המתפשטות ברוב ישראל לדבר מפורסם...וכל דבר פשוט ומפורסם... התוספות כתב בטעם שלא מקשה הש"ס "תנא היכי קאי" משום דהדבר ידוע מסברא, וכוונת התוס' שדבר הידוע מסברא אינו צריך קרא כלל...[ובמקום אחר באותו חיבור מבאר הרב הירשנזון:] וכל דבר הידוע מסברא והדעת נוטה אליו והמופת מחייבו אין צריכים כלל לציוו ונתחייב אדם בו כמו שה' בהם ציוו, כי הוא מחוקי הצדק אשר הכונן משרים נטע בחוק הטבע ועולם חסד יבנה...

Rabbi Hirschensohn, "HaMisderonah", selections:

"The sage - where is he standing?" [The Talmud's answer, that he is "standing" on the scripture] doesn't refer only to the scripture itself, but rather includes all commonly known precepts of Judaism that most Jews accept to be true…[that is] everything that is simple and generally known…[and then R. Hirschensohn mentions the Tosafot quoted above, and he explains that] the Tosafot wrote that the reason that the Talmud doesn't ask "the sage - where is he standing?" [in regard to the blessings for fruit] is because [saying a blessing over food] is known from s'vara [which can be translated as reason, common sense or rationality], and what they mean is that anything which is known from s'vara does not need [a basis] in scripture at all…anything which is known from s'vara, and stands to reason, and logic

proves it, there is no need for any commandment, and human beings are bound by it just as if God had commanded them, because [that which is known by s'vara] is part of the laws of justice that He who established righteousness planted in the law of nature, and [as it is written in Psalms 89:3], "the world is built upon loving-kindness"…



Miriam. From "Story of the Bible", authored by Rev. Hurlbut, 1904.

Section Two: The Rambam on Intellect and Interpretation

Perek Helek (part of the Rambam's Commentary on the Mishnah, Tractate Sanhedrin):

…[W]hen you encounter a word of the sages which seems to conflict with *intellect*, you will pause, consider it, and realize that this utterance must be a riddle or a parable. You will sleep on it, trying anxiously to grasp its logic and its expression, so that you many find its genuine *intellectual* intention and lay hold of a direct faith, as Scripture says: "To find out words of delight, and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth" (Eccles. 12:10).

Note: Similarly, in the Guide to the Perplexed 2:25, he states says that if science had proven that the world is eternal and not created, in contradiction to the simple meaning of the Bible, he would have interpreted the Bible to say that the world is eternal. He explains there that "the gates of figurative interpretation are not shut in our faces".

Section Three: Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn on Reason, Morality and Jewish Law

Malki Bakodesh, Vol. 4, pg. 10

עלינו לחשוב על כל דבר מצד המוסר וההגיון יחד, ואשר אנו מוצאים אותו כשר וישר ונכון וקיים משני היסודות האלו עלינו להביט בההלכה אשר דרכיה דרכי נעם וכל נתיבותיה שלום אשר בודאי איננה מתנגדת לדבר הישר והנכון מצד ההגיון ומוסר, ואם אנו מוצאים אותה מתנגדת עלינו להתיגע עד שנמצא כי לא ריק היא ממנו, שאין אנו מבינים או את ההלכה או את המוסר...

We must consider all things in light of morality and reason, and that which we find *kosher* and upright and established in relation to these two foundations, we then look into the *halacha* [Jewish law] – that all its paths are paths of pleasantness and its ways are peace (Prov. 3:17) – for the *halacha* never contradicts something with is upright and true in regard to morality and reason, and if we find [what seems to be a] contradiction, then we must struggle in study until we find that…either we don't understand the *halacha*, or we don't understand morality…

Points to Consider

- How are the Rambam and Rabbi Hirschensohn similar in their interpretative approach? How are they different?
- How do the explicit instructions about how to read sacred text, given by the Rambam and Rabbi Hirschensohn, relate to how the sages approached kiryat shema above?

3. Prophecy: The God of Justice

Isaiah 1 **ישעיהו פרק א׳**

1 ¶ The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. 2 ¶ Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, my people does not consider. 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity,

(א) חֲזוֹן יְשַׁעְיָהוּ בֶן אָמוֹץ אֲשֶׁר חָזָה עַל יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלִָם בִּימֵי עֻזִּיָּהוּ יוֹתָם אָחָז יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ מַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה׃ (ב) שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהַאֲזִינִי אֶרֶץ כִּי יְקֹוָק דִּבֶּר בָּנִים גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִי׃ (ג) יָדַע שׁוֹר קֹנֵהוּ וַחֲמוֹר אֵבוּס בְּעָלָיו יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנָן׃ (ד) הוֹי גּוֹי חֹטֵא עַם כֶּבֶד עָוֹן זֶרַע מְרֵעִים בָּנִים מַשְׁחִיתִים עָזְבוּ אֶת יְקֹוָק נִאֲצוּ אֶת קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נָזֹרוּ אָחוֹר׃ […]

a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward. […]



Prophet Isaiah; illustration from a Bible card published by the Providence Lithograph Co. (c. 1904). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah.

Isaiah the son of Amotz lived and prophesized in Jerusalem in the 8th century BCE. It's possible that the first 39 chapters of the Book of Isaiah, as we have it, more or less contain the prophecy of the historical Isaiah (after that, it's "second Isaiah", "third Isaiah" and so forth.)

Isaiah was one of the earliest pioneers of Biblical Israelite religious consciousness. Keep in mind that the books of the Bible (including the Five Books of Moses) as we have them, did not exist in his time. His religious experience, and how he understood it, were formative influences on the ideas and words of the holy writ as it has been passed down to us.

For more about his ideas see pg. 67-68.

10 ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. 11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? said the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 12 When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them. 15 And when you spread

(י) שִׁמְעוּ דְבַר יְקֹוָק קְצִינֵי סְדֹם הַאֲזִינוּ תּוֹרַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַם עֲמֹרָה׃ (יא) לָמָּה לִּי רֹב זִבְחֵיכֶם יֹאמַר יְקֹוָק שָׂבַעְתִּי עֹלוֹת אֵילִים וְחֵלֶב מְרִיאִים וְדַם פָּרִים וּכְבָשִׂים וְעַתּוּדִים לֹא חָפָצְתִּי׃ (יב) כִּי תָבֹאוּ לֵרָאוֹת פָּנָי מִי בִקֵּשׁ זֹאת מִיֶּדְכֶם רְמֹס חֲצֵרָי׃ (יג) לֹא תוֹסִיפוּ הָבִיא מִנְחַת שָׁוְא קְטֹרֶת תּוֹעֵבָה הִיא לִי חֹדֶשׁ וְשַׁבָּת קְרֹא מִקְרָא לֹא אוּכַל אָוֶן וַעֲצָרָה׃ (יד) חָדְשֵׁיכֶם וּמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם שָׂנְאָה נַפְשִׁי הָיוּ עָלַי לָטֹרַח נִלְאֵיתִי נְשֹׂא׃ (טו) וּבְפָרִשְׂכֶם כַּפֵּיכֶם אַעְלִים עֵינַי מִכֶּם גַּם כִּי תַרְבּוּ תְפִלָּה אֵינֶנִּי שֹׁמֵעַ יְדֵיכֶם דָּמִים מָלֵאוּ׃ (טז) רַחֲצוּ הִזַּכּוּ הָסִירוּ רֹעַ מַעַלְלֵיכֶם מִנֶּגֶד עֵינָי חִדְלוּ הָרֵעַ׃ (יז) לִמְדוּ הֵיטֵב דִּרְשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט אַשְּׁרוּ חָמוֹץ שִׁפְטוּ יָתוֹם רִיבוּ אַלְמָנָה׃

forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not

hear: your hands are full of blood. 16 ¶ Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. […]

(כא) אֵיכָה הָיְתָה לְזוֹנָה קִרְיָה נֶאֱמָנָה מְלֵאתִי מִשְׁפָּט צֶדֶק יָלִין בָּהּ וְעַתָּה מְרַצְּחִים: (כב) כַּסְפֵּךְ הָיָה לְסִיגִים סָבְאֵךְ מָהוּל בַּמָּיִם: (כג) שָׂרַיִךְ סוֹרְרִים וְחַבְרֵי גַּנָּבִים כֻּלּוֹ אֹהֵב שֹׁחַד וְרֹדֵף שַׁלְמֹנִים יָתוֹם לֹא יִשְׁפֹּטוּ וְרִיב אַלְמָנָה לֹא יָבוֹא אֲלֵיהֶם: פ

21 ¶ How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. 22 Your silver is become dross, your wine mixed with water: 23 Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loves gifts, and follows after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come to them.

(כד) לָכֵן נְאֻם הָאָדוֹן ה׳ צְבָאוֹת אֲבִיר יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹי אָנָּחֵם מִצָּרַי וְאִנָּקְמָה מֵאוֹיְבָי: (כה) וְאָשִׁיבָה יָדִי עָלַיִךְ וְאֶצְרֹף כַּבֹּר סִיגָיִךְ וְאָסִירָה כָּל בְּדִילָיִךְ: (כו) וְאָשִׁיבָה שֹׁפְטַיִךְ כְּבָרִאשֹׁנָה וְיֹעֲצַיִךְ כְּבַתְּחִלָּה אַחֲרֵי כֵן יִקָּרֵא לָךְ עִיר הַצֶּדֶק קִרְיָה נֶאֱמָנָה: (כז) צִיּוֹן בְּמִשְׁפָּט תִּפָּדֶה וְשָׁבֶיהָ בִּצְדָקָה: [...]

24 Therefore said the LORD, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of my enemies: 24 Therefore said the LORD, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of my enemies: 25 And I will turn my hand on you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin: 26 And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning: afterward you shall be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. 27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and those that return to her with righteousness.

ב׳ (א) הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר חָזָה יְשַׁעְיָהוּ בֶּן אָמוֹץ עַל יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלָם: (ב) וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים נָכוֹן יִהְיֶה הַר בֵּית ה׳ בְּרֹאשׁ הֶהָרִים וְנִשָּׂא מִגְּבָעוֹת וְנָהֲרוּ אֵלָיו כָּל הַגּוֹיִם: (ג) וְהָלְכוּ עַמִּים רַבִּים וְאָמְרוּ לְכוּ וְנַעֲלֶה אֶל הַר ה׳ אֶל בֵּית אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וְיֹרֵנוּ מִדְּרָכָיו וְנֵלְכָה בְּאֹרְחֹתָיו כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וּדְבַר ה׳ מִירוּשָׁלָם: (ד) וְשָׁפַט בֵּין הַגּוֹיִם וְהוֹכִיחַ לְעַמִּים רַבִּים וְכִתְּתוּ חַרְבוֹתָם לְאִתִּים וַחֲנִיתוֹתֵיהֶם לְמַזְמֵרוֹת לֹא יִשָּׂא גוֹי אֶל גּוֹי חֶרֶב וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְחָמָה:

2:1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke

many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Points to Consider

- You have just finished reading selections from the first two chapters of Isaiah. Some scholars have suggested that these chapters were edited in order to present the central themes in the first Isaiah's prophecy (spanning chapters 1-39). If so, what are the central themes on the prophet's mind? Can you state his basic messages in your own words?

3:13 The LORD stands up to sue, and stands to judge the people. 14 The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders of his people, and the princes thereof: for you have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses! 15 What mean you that you beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? said the Lord GOD of hosts. […]

5:8 Woe to them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the middle of the earth! 9 In my ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. 10 Yes, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.

ג׳ (יג) נָצָב לָרִיב יְקֹוָק וְעֹמֵד לָדִין עַמִּים: (יד) יְקֹוָק בְּמִשְׁפָּט יָבוֹא עִם זִקְנֵי עַמּוֹ וְשָׂרָיו וְאַתֶּם בִּעַרְתֶּם הַכֶּרֶם גְּזֵלַת הֶעָנִי בָּבָתֵּיכֶם: (טו) מלכם מַה לָּכֶם תְּדַכְּאוּ עַמִּי וּפְנֵי עֲנִיִּים תִּטְחָנוּ נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְקֹוִק צְבָאוֹת: ס […]

ה (ח) הוֹי מַגִּיעֵי בַיִת בְּבַיִת שָׂדֶה בְשָׂדֶה יַקְרִיבוּ עַד אֶפֶס מָקוֹם וְהוּשַׁבְתֶּם לְבַדְּכֶם בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ: (ט) בְּאָזְנָי יְקֹוָק צְבָאוֹת אִם לֹא בָּתִּים רַבִּים לְשַׁמָּה יִהְיוּ גְּדֹלִים וְטוֹבִים מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב: (י) כִּי עֲשֶׂרֶת צִמְדֵי כֶרֶם יַעֲשׂוּ בַּת אֶחָת וְזֶרַע חֹמֶר יַעֲשֶׂה אֵיפָה:

Points to Consider (regarding Isaiah Chapters 3 and 5 above)

- What does it mean that God will sue the people? Does He have a good lawyer?
- What are God's claims against the people?
- What is the punishment?

11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of

יא (א) וְיָצָא חֹטֶר מִגֵּזַע יִשָׁי וְנֵצֶר מִשָּׁרָשָׁיו יִפְרֶה: (ב) וְנָחָה עָלָיו רוּחַ יְקֹוָק רוּחַ חָכְמָה וּבִינָה רוּחַ עֵצָה וּגְבוּרָה רוּחַ דַּעַת וְיִרְאַת יְקֹוָק: (ג) וַהֲרִיחוֹ בְּיִרְאַת יְקֹוָק וְלֹא לְמַרְאֵה עֵינָיו יִשְׁפּוֹט וְלֹא לְמִשְׁמַע אָזְנָיו יוֹכִיחַ: (ד) וְשָׁפַט בְּצֶדֶק דַּלִּים וְהוֹכִיחַ בְּמִישׁוֹר לְעַנְוֵי אָרֶץ וְהִכָּה אֶרֶץ בְּשֵׁבֶט פִּיו וּבְרוּחַ שְׂפָתָיו יָמִית רָשָׁע: (ה) וְהָיָה צֶדֶק אֵזוֹר מָתְנָיו וְהָאֱמוּנָה אֵזוֹר חֲלָצָיו: (ו) וְגָר זְאֵב עִם כֶּבֶשׂ וְנָמֵר עִם גְּדִי יִרְבָּץ וְעֵגֶל וּכְפִיר וּמְרִיא יַחְדָּו וְנַעַר קָטֹן נֹהֵג בָּם: (ז) וּפָרָה וָדֹב תִּרְעֶינָה יַחְדָּו יִרְבְּצוּ יַלְדֵיהֶן וְאַרְיֵה כַּבָּקָר יֹאכַל תֶּבֶן:

his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. 6 The

(ח) וְשִׁעֲשַׁע יוֹנֵק עַל חֻר פָּתֶן וְעַל מְאוּרַת צִפְעוֹנִי גָּמוּל יָדוֹ הָדָה: (ט) לֹא יָרֵעוּ וְלֹא יַשְׁחִיתוּ בְּכָל הַר קָדְשִׁי כִּי מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ דֵּעָה אֶת יְקֹוָק כַּמַּיִם לַיָּם מְכַסִּים:

wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatted calf together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Points to Consider

- In Isaiah 11 (immediately above) and in Isaiah 2 (further above), are two of Isaiah's most famous visions of the Messianic future. Isaiah's vision includes clearly universalistic elements, like judgment and justice for all nations, and clearly particularistic elements, like the "God of Israel" and the Temple Mount. What is the relationship between these elements?

25: 1 O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things; your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. 2 For you have made of a city an heap; of a defended city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.3 Therefore shall the strong people glorify you, the city of the terrible nations shall fear you. 4 For you have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. 5 You shall bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

כה (א) יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהַי אַתָּה אֲרוֹמִמְךָ אוֹדֶה שִׁמְךָ כִּי עָשִׂיתָ פֶּלֶא עֵצוֹת מֵרָחוֹק אֱמוּנָה אֹמֶן: (ב) כִּי שַׂמְתָּ מֵעִיר לַגָּל קִרְיָה בְצוּרָה לְמַפֵּלָה אַרְמוֹן זָרִים מֵעִיר לְעוֹלָם לֹא יִבָּנֶה: (ג) עַל כֵּן יְכַבְּדוּךָ עַם עָז קִרְיַת גּוֹיִם עָרִיצִים יִירָאוּךָ: (ד) כִּי הָיִיתָ מָעוֹז לַדָּל מָעוֹז לָאֶבְיוֹן בַּצַר לוֹ מַחְסֶה מִזֶּרֶם צֵל מֵחֹרֶב כִּי רוּחַ עָרִיצִים כְּזֶרֶם קִיר: (ה) כְּחֹרֶב בְּצָיוֹן שְׁאוֹן זָרִים תַּכְנִיעַ חֹרֶב בְּצֵל עָב זְמִיר עָרִיצִים יַעֲנֶה: פ

6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of

(ו) וְעָשָׂה יְקֹוָק צְבָאוֹת לְכָל הָעַמִּים בָּהָר הַזֶּה מִשְׁתֵּה שְׁמָנִים מִשְׁתֵּה שְׁמָרִים שְׁמָנִים מְמֻחֲיִם שְׁמָרִים מְזֻקָּקִים: (ז) וּבִלַּע בָּהָר הַזֶּה פְּנֵי הַלּוֹט הַלּוֹט עַל כָּל הָעַמִּים וְהַמַּסֵּכָה הַנְּסוּכָה עַל כָּל הַגּוֹיִם: (ח) בִּלַּע הַמָּוֶת לָנֶצַח וּמָחָה אֲדֹנָי יְקֹוִק דִּמְעָה מֵעַל כָּל פָּנִים וְחֶרְפַּת עַמּוֹ יָסִיר מֵעַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ כִּי יְקֹוָק דִּבֵּר: פ

hosts make to all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD has spoken it.

Points to Consider

- In the first paragraph above (Isaiah 25:1-5), the prophet sings a song of praise to God. What can you learn from the song about the vision of the prophet?
- In the second paragraph (Isaiah 25:6-8), Isaiah provides further details about the End of Days. What do they mean?
- In conclusion, can you sum up in your own words what Isaiah believes that God wants for the world?

4. Talmud: The Rule of Law

Devarim 16:20

Justice, justice shall you follow, that you may live, and inherit the land which the LORD your God gives you.

דברים טז (כ)

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה וְיָרַשְׁתָּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ:

Sifrei Devarim 144:20

"That you may live, and inherit the land" - this teaches that appointing judges is worthy of resurrecting the People Israel, returning them to their land and protecting them from the sword.

ספרי דברים: קמד כ

למען תחיה וירשתה את הארץ, מלמד שמנוי הדיינים כדיי הוא להחיות את ישראל ולהושיבם על אדמתם ושלא להפילם בחרב.

Points to Consider

- Does the midrash express the simple meaning of the verse? If not, where might its interpretation come from?
- Regarding the text below: We saw that Isaiah envisioned that "Torah" would go forth from Zion to the world. And we asked, what Torah would that be (what is written in the Torah addressed to all human beings)? How do the sages answer that question?



Talmud of Venice 1520 (Hebraic Section, Library of Congress Photo). From www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org

Look at the shapes! Don't they look like people talking? (The guy on the right is talking with his hands. Look for his eye/mouth!)

The **Talmud** ("instruction, learning")is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. It has two components. The first part is the Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the written compendium of Rabbinic Judaism's Oral Torah. The second part is the Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible. The whole Talmud consists of 63 tractates, and in standard print is over 6,200 pages. (Adapted from Wiki)

Studying the Talmud and other Rabbinic texts is a text-based Jewish spiritual practice. It's an important part of how we build the life-form and world-view involved in Torah life (see the Conceptual Framework, Pg. 63).

Bavrli Sanhedrin 56a-b

Our Rabbis taught: seven precepts were the sons of Noah commanded: laws [dinim]; to refrain from blasphemy, idolatry; adultery; bloodshed; robbery; and eating flesh cut from a living animal.

R. Hanania b. Gamaliel said: Also not to partake of the blood drawn from a living animal. R. Hidka added emasculation. R. Simeon added sorcery. R. Jose said: The heathens were prohibited everything that is

בבלי סנהדרין נו א-ב

תנו רבנן: שבע מצות נצטוו בני נח: דינין וברכת השם ע"ז גילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים וגזל ואבר מן החי.

רבי חנניה בן גמלא אומר: אף על הדם מן החי. רבי חידקא אומר: אף על הסירוס. רבי שמעון אומר: אף על הכישוף. רבי יוסי אומר: כל האמור בפרשת כישוף - בן נח מוזהר עליו (דברים יח:י-יב) לֹא יִמָּצֵא בְךָ מַעֲבִיר בְּנוֹ וּבִתּוֹ בָּאֵשׁ קֹסֵם קְסָמִים מְעוֹנֵן

וּמְנַחֵשׁ וּמְכַשֵּׁף וְחֹבֵר חָבֶר וְשֹׁאֵל אוֹב וְיִדְּעֹנִי וְדֹרֵשׁ אֶל הַמֵּתִים וגו׳ וּבְגִלַּל הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵלֶּה יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ מוֹרִישׁ אוֹתָם מִפָּנֶיךָ, ולא ענש אלא אם כן הזהיר. [...]

mentioned in the section on sorcery, that is, (Deut. 18:1-12) "There shall not be found among you any one, that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar Spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee." Now, [the Almighty] does not punish without first prohibiting. *[Soncino notes: Therefore, since it is stated that they are being expelled as a punishment for these sins, they must first have been warned (i.e. prohibited) against them.]*

Points to Consider

- Can you state in your own words what the sages are arguing about?
- What is the logic of R. Jose's position (on the previous page)? How does he deduce from scripture what part of the Torah applies to all people?

The Talmud continues from above…

מנהני מילי? אמר ר׳ יוחנן דאמר קרא (בראשית ב:טז) וַיְצַו ה׳ אֱלֹהִים עַל הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכֹּל עֵץ הַגָּן אָכֹל תֹּאכֵל:. ״וַיְצַו״, אלו הדינין, וכן הוא אומר (בראשית יח:יט) כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת בָּנָיו [וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה׳ לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט] [...]

כי אתא רבי יצחק תני איפכא: ויצו - זו עבודה זרה, אלהים זו דינין. בשלמא אלהים זו דינין - דכתיב +שמות כ״ב+ ונקרב בעל הבית אל האלהים. אלא ויצו זו עבודה זרה

Whence do we know this? — R. Johanan answered: The Writ saith: And the Lord God commanded the man saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. (Gen. 2:16), "[And the Lord God] commanded" refers to the laws [dinim], as it is written, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." (Gen. 18:19).

When R. Isaac came, he taught a reversed interpretation: "And commanded" refers to idolatry; "God" [Heb. Elohim], refers to social laws [dinim]…"Elohim" may rightly refer to social laws, as it is written, (Ex. 12:7) "And the master of the house shall be brought unto elohim [i.e., the judges]…

Points to Consider

- How does R. Yochanan learn "the seven Noachide laws" from Genesis 2? Clearly, this is not the simple meaning of the verse. Why do you think that R. Yochanan chose to drash this verse in particular? (What does this tell you about the nature of midrash?)
- What is the connection between "dinim" (the social laws) and the verses quoted? See below for the context of the verses.

רבי יוחנן לומד ״דינים״ מ״ויצו״ בגלל בראשית יט,יח:

(יז) וַיקֹוָק אָמָר הַמְכַסֶּה אֲנִי מֵאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה׃ (יח) וְאַבְרָהָם הָיוֹ יִהְיֶה לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְעָצוּם **וְנִבְרְכוּ בוֹ כֹּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ׃** (יט) **כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת בָּנָיו וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְקֹוָק**

Rabbi Yochanan learned that the words "He Commanded" [which appear in Genesis 2: 16) refer to the social laws [dinim] through reflecting on Genesis 18:19

17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; 18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and

mighty nation, **and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him**? 19 **For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment**; that the LORD may bring on Abraham that which he has spoken of him.

20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; 21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come to me; and if not, I will know. […]

לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הָבִיא יְקֹוָק עַל אַבְרָהָם אֵת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר עָלָיו׃

(כ) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹוָק זַעֲקַת סְדֹם וַעֲמֹרָה כִּי רָבָּה וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי כָבְדָה מְאֹד׃ (כא) אֵרְדָה נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה הַכְּצַעֲקָתָהּ הַבָּאָה אֵלַי עָשׂוּ כָּלָה וְאִם לֹא אֵדָעָה׃ […]

(כג) וַיִּגַּשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמַר הַאַף תִּסְפֶּה צַדִּיק עִם רָשָׁע׃! (כד) אוּלַי יֵשׁ חֲמִשִּׁים צַדִּיקִם בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר הַאַף תִּסְפֶּה וְלֹא תִשָּׂא לַמָּקוֹם לְמַעַן חֲמִשִּׁים הַצַּדִּיקִם אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבָּהּ׃ (כה) חָלִלָה לְךָ מֵעֲשֹׂת כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה לְהָמִית צַדִּיק עִם רָשָׁע וְהָיָה כַצַּדִּיק כָּרָשָׁע חָלִלָה לָךְ! **הֲשֹׁפֵט** כָּל הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה **מִשְׁפָּט**׃!

23 ¶ And Abraham drew near, and said, Will you also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: will you also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? 25 That be far from you to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from you: **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?**

R. Yitschak learned that the word "God" (Elokim) appearing in Genesis 2:16 refer to the social laws (dinim) through reflecting on Ex. 22:7

7 If a man shall deliver to his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double. 8 If the thief be not found, **then the master of the house shall be brought to the judges [Elohim]**, to see whether he have put his hand to his neighbor's goods. 9 For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing which another challenges to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges [Elohim]; and whom the judges [Elohim] shall condemn, he shall pay double to his neighbor.

רבי יצחק לומד "דינים" מ"אלוהים" עקב שמות כב:ז

(ו) כִּי יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ כֶּסֶף אוֹ כֵלִים לִשְׁמֹר וְגֻנַּב מִבֵּית הָאִישׁ אִם יִמָּצֵא הַגַּנָּב יְשַׁלֵּם שְׁנָיִם׃ (ז) אִם לֹא יִמָּצֵא הַגַּנָּב **וְנִקְרַב בַּעַל הַבַּיִת אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים** אִם לֹא שָׁלַח יָדוֹ בִּמְלֶאכֶת רֵעֵהוּ׃ (ח) עַל כָּל דְּבַר פֶּשַׁע עַל שׁוֹר עַל חֲמוֹר עַל שֶׂה עַל שַׂלְמָה עַל כָּל אֲבֵדָה אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר כִּי הוּא זֶה עַד הָאֱלֹהִים יָבֹא דְּבַר שְׁנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר יַרְשִׁיעֻן אֱלֹהִים יְשַׁלֵּם שְׁנַיִם לְרֵעֵהוּ׃

Points to Consider

- How do R. Yochanan and R. Yitschak learn that their respective words ("commanded" or "Elohim") teach about the social laws (dinim)?
- How might their different ways of learning about dinim reflect different conceptions of what dinim are? (If R. Yochanan is right, what does that say about the nature of the dinim? And if R. Yitschak is right? Can they both be right?)
- In light of the above question, what are the dinim? How should we think about them? See the next page for some classical medieval answers…

Ramban (1194 – 1270) on dinim (from his commentary on Genesis 34:13)

רמב"ן על דינים (מפירושו לבראשית לד יג)

ועל דעתי הדינין שמנו לבני נח בשבע מצות שלהם אינם להושיב דיינין בכל פלך ופלך בלבד, אבל צוה אותם [בדינים]...כענין הדינין שנצטוו ישראל...

In my opinion, the meaning of "laws" [dinim] which the Rabbis counted among the seven Noachide commandments is not just that they are to appoint judges in each and every district, but God commanded them concerning [laws]…similar in scope to the laws with which Israel was charged…

Ramban on Lev. 18:4

רמב"ן על ויקרא יח:ד

You shall do my laws, and keep my ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God. (Lev. 18:4).

אֶת מִשְׁפָּטַי תַּעֲשׂוּ וְאֶת חֻקֹּתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ לָלֶכֶת בָּהֶם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (ויקרא יח ד)

[In his commentary on the above verse, the Ramban first quotes Rashi's interpretation:] "You shall do my laws", these are matters written in Torah that even if they were not written, reason requires they be legislated, this is Rashi's interpretation…

אֶת מִשְׁפָּטַי תַּעֲשׂוּ - אלו דברים האמורים בתורה שאילו לא נאמרו בדין היה לאומרן, לשון רש"י. .. ועל דרך הפשט, "משפטי" כמשמען, הדינין האמורים בפרשת "ואלה המשפטים" ובכל התורה, ולכך יאמר אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם - כי הדינים נתנו לחיי האדם בישוב המדינות ושלום האדם, ושלא יזיק איש את רעהו ולא ימיתנו.

[Now the Ramban gives his own interpretation:] And the simple meaning is that the term laws [mishpatim] should be understood in the simple meaning of this term: It is a reference to the social laws [dinim] stated in [the legal code entitled] "these are the laws" (eleh hamisphatim - Ex. 21:1) and throughout the Torah. In characterizing these laws, God says "which if a man do, he shall **live** by them" (Lev. 18:5) - because the social laws [dinim] were given for the **life of humanity**, through establishing civilized communities and peace among human beings, and through preventing people from injuring their fellows or killing them.

Points to Consider

- Try to state in your own words how the Ramban understands the concept of "dinim".
- Are we fulfilling this divine commandment today? How might we be able to fulfill it?



Wall painting of Rabbi Moses ben Nachman at the wall of Akko's Auditorium. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nahmanides.

Nachmanides or Ramban - Rabbi Moses ben Nahman Girondi (1194 – 1270), was a leading medieval Jewish scholar, philosopher, physician, kabbalist, and biblical commentator. He was raised, studied, and lived for most of his life in Girona, Catalonia. He died in the Land of Israel about 1270. (Adapted from Wiki).

5. Philosophy: The Divine Purpose of the Human Species

Selections from the Guide to the Perplexed 2:40

IT has already been fully explained that man is political by nature and that it is his nature to live in society… He is, as you know, the highest form in the creation, and he therefore includes the largest number of constituent elements; this is the reason why the human race contains such a great variety of individuals…two persons may be so different from each other in every respect that they appear to belong to two different species! Whilst one person is so cruel that he kills his youngest child in his anger, another is too delicate and faint-hearted to kill even a fly or worm…The great variety of the human species, together with the fact that they are naturally social animals, necessitates…agreed upon laws [so that]…the community becomes well ordered.



Monument in Cordoba to Moses Maimonides: 1135 (Spain) - 1204 (Egypt). Maimonides' philosophy, scholarship and interpretation were deeply formative of what we call "Judaism" today. His major works have been pillars of Jewish learning throughout the ages.

[*The Rambam says that there are two kinds of laws: Those that were legislated by God and those that are only based on human opinion ("nomos"). Then, he teaches us how to distinguish between divine and merely human laws:*]

If you find a Law that its sole object is…the ordering of the state and its affairs, and the abolition of injustice and oppression, and if in that Law attention is not at all directed toward speculative matters, no heed is given to perfecting the rational faculty, and no regard is accorded to opinions being correct or faulty…you must know that that Law is merely nomos [it did not come from God]…

If, on the other hand, you find a Law that aims, like the law just mentioned, at the improvement of the material interests of the people, but also at the soundness of human consciousness [or "belief" or "knowledge"], taking pains to teach correct ideas about God…and to make people wise, to give them understanding, and to awaken their attention, so that they grasp an accurate knowledge of the Universe - you must know that this guidance comes from God, may God be exalted, and that this Law is divine. […]

The question which now remains to be settled is this: Is the person who proclaimed the Law the same perfect man that received it by prophetic inspiration, or a plagiarist, who has stolen it from a true prophet? In order to answer this question, we must examine the merits of the person…[If the guy who proclaimed the law is into a lot of sex and other physical pleasures, explains the Rambam, he's not the guy who received the divine communication.]

Points to Consider

- You're handed a book of laws. How can you know, according to the Rambam, whether or not the book you hold was written by God?
- For the Rambam, the Torah is a "Law" like the ones referred to above: It's a legal and political platform upon which to build a well ordered community. Is the Torah a divine Law? Or merely "nomos"? How can you know?

- What the Rambam calls "divine" is a Law aimed at the material and spiritual well being of humanity. What makes such a law "divine"? What's "God" got to do with it?

Selections from the Guide 3:27

THE general object of the Law is twofold: the well-being of the soul, and the well-being of the body. The well-being of the soul is promoted by true ideas communicated to the people according to their capacity [that enable them to cleave to God and serve from love]…The well-being of the body is established by a proper management of the relations in which we live one to another. This we can attain in two ways: first by removing all violence from our midst…Secondly, by teaching every one of us such moral qualities as must produce a good social state.

Of these two objects, the one, the well-being of the soul…comes undoubtedly first in rank, but the other, the well-being of the body, the government of the state, and the establishment of the best possible relations among people, is…is required first; it is also treated [in the Law] most carefully and most minutely, because the well-being of the soul can only be obtained after that of the body has been secured.

For it has already been found that man has a double perfection: the first perfection is that of the body, and the second perfection is that of the soul. The first perfection consists in being healthy and in the very best bodily state, and this is only possible through his finding the things necessary for him whenever he seeks them. These are his food and all the other things needed for the governance of his body, such as shelter, bathing, and so forth…His ultimate perfection [the second perfection, that of the soul] is to realize his rational potential…

…the Law of our teacher Moses has for its purpose to give us the twofold perfection. It aims first at the establishment of good mutual relations among people by removing injustice and creating the noblest feelings…Secondly, it seeks to train us in faith, and to impart true ideas when the intellect is sufficiently developed…

Scripture clearly mentions the twofold perfection, and tells us that its acquisition is the object of all the divine commandments. Comp. "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as it is this day" (Deut. vi. 24). …I explain the words, "for our good always," to mean that we may come into the world that is all good and eternal, where we may live permanently; and the words, "that he might preserve us alive as it is this day, "I explain as referring to our first and temporal existence, to that of our body, which cannot be in a perfect and good condition except by the co-operation of society, as has been shown by us.

Points to Consider

- What is the purpose of the Torah according to the Rambam?
- Is the Torah divine? How do you know? (Does it matter if Biblical criticism is true?)
- Let's say we set up a Torah state and live according to the Torah. Based on the Rambam, how can we know if the Torah is achieving its goals?

Mashiach, Mashiach, Mashiach…and the Complete Redemption

The Laws of Kings 11:3

Do not think that the King Mashiach must work signs and wonders, create new things, resurrect the dead, or the other things that fools say; it is not so!

הלכות מלכים, יא: ג

אַל יַעֲלֶה עַל דַּעְתְּךָ שֶׁהַמֶּלֶךְ הַמָּשִׁיחַ, צָרִיךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתוֹת וּמוֹפְתִים, וּמְחַדֵּשׁ דְּבָרִים בָּעוֹלָם, אוֹ מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים, וְכַיּוֹצֵא בְּדְבָרִים אֵלּוּ שֶׁהַטִּפְּשִׁים אוֹמְרִים; אֵין הַדָּבָר כֵּן

The Laws of Kings 12:1-2

Do not think that in the days of the Mashiach, the laws of nature will change, or there will be some innovation in the created world; rather the world will continue according to its ways…

The Sages have said; the only difference between our days, and the days of the Mashiach, is political oppression...

הלכות מלכים, יב:א-ב

אַל יַעֲלֶה עַל הַלֵּב שֶׁבִּימוֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ, יִבָּטֵל דָּבָר מִמִּנְהָגוֹ שֶׁלָּעוֹלָם, אוֹ יִהְיֶה שָׁם חִדּוּשׁ בְּמַעֲשֶׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית; אֶלָּא עוֹלָם כְּמִנְהָגוֹ הוֹלֵךְ...

אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים, אֵין בֵּין הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה לִימוֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ, אֶלָּא שִׁעְבּוּד מַלְכִיּוֹת בִּלְבָד...

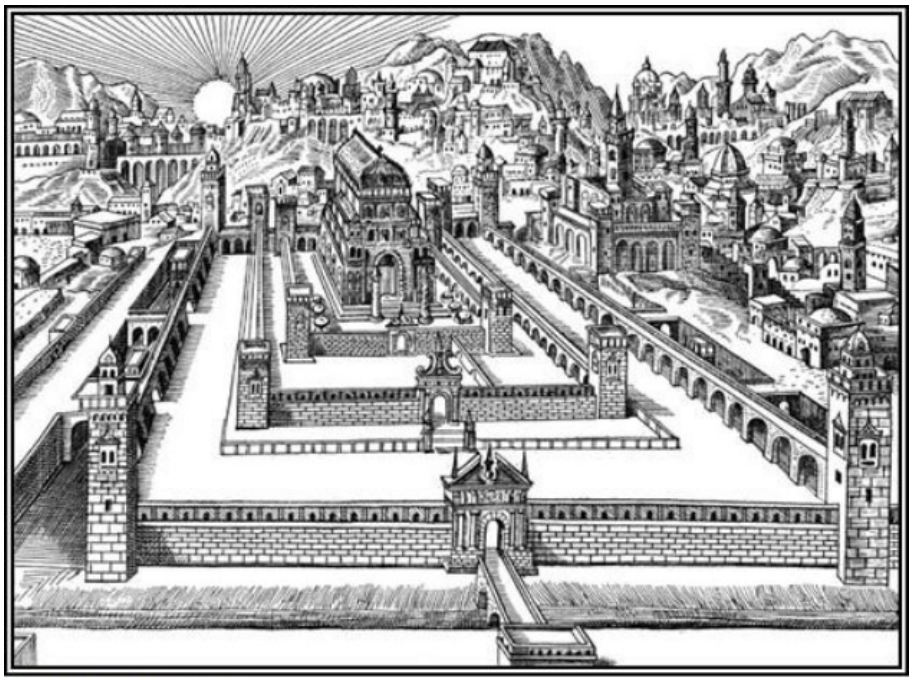
Points to Consider

- Will you know the Mashiach when you see her?
- The Rambam teaches that the real Mashiach is the one who implements the Divine Law and thus heals the body and soul of Israel and humanity. If humanity was healthy, in body and in soul, as individuals and as a collective, what would people be like? Describe them!
- Do you think you know what God wants for the human species?



From www.habad.org

The End of Days



Amsterdam Haggadah 1695

*"If, however, you have achieved perfection in the natural things and have understood divine science, you have entered into the ruler's place **into the inner court** and are with him in one habitation."*
The Guide 3:51

Mishneh Torah, Shoftim, Melachim, Chapter 12

Based on Machon Mamrei's Version

4] The Sages and the prophets did not yearn for the days of the Messiah to have dominion over the world, or rule over the gentiles, or be exalted by the nations, or to eat, drink, and celebrate. Rather, they desired to be free to devote themselves to Torah and her wisdom, with no one to oppress or disturb them, so that they would merit the world to come, as explained in *Hilchot Teshuvah*.

5] In that era, there will be neither famine nor war, neither jealousy nor strife. Blessings will be abundant, comforts within the reach of all. The one preoccupation of the whole world will be to know God. Thus they will become greatly wise, and will know hidden and deep matters; grasping the knowledge of their Creator to the utmost capacity of the human mind, as it is written, (Isaiah 11:9), "[They will not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain] for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

הלכות מלכים, פרק יב.

נוסח מכון ממרא

ד] לֹא נִתְאַוּוּ הַנְּבִיאִים וְהַחֲכָמִים יְמוֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ--לֹא כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּשְׁלְטוּ עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם, וְלֹא כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּרְדּוּ בַּגּוֹיִם, וְלֹא כְּדֵי שֶׁיְּנַשְּׂאוּ אוֹתָם הָעַמִּים, וְלֹא כְּדֵי לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ: אֶלָּא כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּהְיוּ פְּנוּיִין בַּתּוֹרָה וְחָכְמָתָהּ, וְלֹא יִהְיֶה לָהֶם נוֹגֵשׂ וּמְבַטֵּל, כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּזְכּוּ לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, כְּמוֹ שֶׁבֵּאַרְנוּ בְּהִלְכוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה.

ה] וּבְאוֹתוֹ הַזְּמָן, לֹא יִהְיֶה שָׁם לֹא רָעָב וְלֹא מִלְחָמָה וְלֹא קִנְאָה וְתַחֲרוּת--שֶׁהַטּוֹבָה תִּהְיֶה מֻשְׁפַּעַת הַרְבֵּה, וְכָל הַמַּעֲדַנִּים מְצוּיִין כֶּעָפָר. וְלֹא יִהְיֶה עסק כָּל הָעוֹלָם, אֶלָּא לָדַעַת אֶת ה' בִּלְבָד. וּלְפִיכָךְ יִהְיוּ חֲכָמִים גְּדוֹלִים, וְיוֹדְעִים דְּבָרִים הַסְּתוּמִים הָעֲמוּקִים ;וְיַשִּׂיגוּ דַּעַת בּוֹרְאָם כְּפִי כֹּחַ הָאָדָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "[לֹא יָרֵעוּ וְלֹא יַשְׁחִיתוּ בְּכָל-הַר קָדְשִׁי] כִּי-מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ דֵּעָה אֶת ה' כַּמַּיִם לַיָּם מְכַסִּים (ישעיהו יא:ט)

6. Kabbalah: The Mystery of Humanity

Zohar Hakdama (1:13b) **זוהר הקדמה א׳ יג ע״ב**

לְשׁוֹן הַזֹּהַר

פִּקּוּדָא תְּשִׁיעָאָה לְמֵימַן לְמִסְכְּנֵי וּלְמֵיהַב לוֹן טַרְפָּא דִּכְתִיב נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ. נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָ״ם, בְּשִׁתּוּפָא כְּלָל דְּכָר וְנוּקְבָא, בְּצַלְמֵנוּ, עָתִירֵי. כִּדְמוּתֵינוּ, מִסְכְּנֵי. דְּהָא מִסְטְרָא דִּדְכוּרָא עָתִירֵי, וּמִסְטְרָא דִּנוּקְבָא מִסְכְּנֵי. כְּמָה דְּאִנּוּן בְּשִׁתּוּפָא חָדָא וְחָס דָּא עַל דָּא וְיָהִיב דָּא לְדָא וְגָמִיל לַהּ טִיבוּ, הָכִי אִצְטְרִיךְ בַּר נָשׁ לְתַתָּא לְמֶהֱוֵי עָתִירָא וּמִסְכְּנָא בְּחַבּוּרָא חָדָא, וּלְמֵיהַב דָּא לְדָא וּלְגַמְלָאָה טוּבָא דָּא לְדָא.

וְיִרְדּוּ בִּדְגַת הַיָּם וְגוֹמֵר רָזָא דְּנָן חֲמֵינָן בְּסִפְרָא דְּשְׁלֵמֹה מַלְכָּא. דְּכָל מָאן דְּחָס עַל מִסְכְּנֵי בִּרְעוּתָא דִּלְבָּא, לָא מִשְׁתַּנֵּי דִּיוּקְנֵהּ לְעָלַם מִדִּיוּקְנָא דְּאָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן. וְכֵיוָן דְּדִיוּקְנָא דְּאָדָ״ם אִתְרְשִׁים בֵּהּ, שָׁלִיט עַל כָּל בְּרִין דְּעָלְמָא בְּהַהוּא דִּיוּקְנָא. הֲדָא הוּא דִּכְתִיב (בראשית ט׳) וּמוֹרַאֲכֶם וְחִתְּכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְגוֹמֵר. כְּלְהוּ זַעִין וְדַחֲלִין מֵהַהוּא דִּיוּקְנָא דְּאִתְרְשִׁים בֵּהּ, בְּגִין דְּדָא הוּא פִּקּוּדָא מְעַלְיָא לְאִסְתַּלָּקָא בַּר נָשׁ בִּדְיוּקְנֵהּ דְּאָדָם, עַל כָּל שְׁאָר פִּקּוּדִין.

מַלְכָּא לָן מִגְּבוּכַדְנֶצַּר, אַף עַל גַּב דְּחָלַם הַהוּא חֶלְמָא כָּל זִמְנָא דַּהֲוָה מֵיחָן לְמִסְכְּנֵי לָא שָׁרָא עֲלֵהּ חֶלְמֵהּ. כֵּיוָן דְּאַטִּיל עֵינָא בִּישָׁא דְּלָא לְמֵיחָן לְמִסְכְּנֵי, מַה כְּתִיב (דניאל ד׳) עוֹד מִלְּתָא בְּפֻם מַלְכָּא וְגוֹמֵר מִיָּד אִשְׁתַּנֵּי דִּיוּקְנֵהּ וְאַטְרִיד מִן בְּנֵי נָשָׁא. וּבְגִין כָּךְ נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם. כְּתִיב הָכָא עֲשִׂיָּה, וּכְתִיב הָתָם (זח כ׳) שֶׁם הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי עִמּוֹ הַיּוֹם בֹּעַז:

לְשׁוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ

מִצְוָה תְּשִׁיעִית לְחוֹן הָעֲנִיִּים וְלָתֵת לָהֶם טָרָף שֶׁכָּתוּב נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ. נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָ״ם, בְּשׁוּתָּפוּת כְּלָל זָכָר וּנְקֵיבָה, בְּצַלְמֵנוּ, עֲשִׁירִים. כִּדְמוּתֵינוּ, עֲנִיִּים. שֶׁהֲרֵי מִצַּד הַזָּכָר עֲשִׁירִים, וּמִצַּד הַנְּקֵיבָה עֲנִיִּים. כְּמוֹ שֶׁהֵם בְּשׁוּתָּפוּת אַחַת וְחָס זֶה עַל זֶה וְנוֹתֵן זֶה לְזֶה וְגוֹמֵל לוֹ טוֹב, כָּךְ צָרִיךְ בֶּן אָדָם לְמַטָּה לִהְיוֹת עָשִׁיר וְעָנִי בְּחִבּוּר אֶחָד, וְלָתֵת זֶה לְזֶה וְלִגְמוֹל טוֹב זֶה לְזֶה.

וְיִרְדּוּ בִּדְגַת הַיָּם וְגוֹמֵר סוֹד זֶה רָאִינוּ בְּסִפְרוֹ שֶׁל שְׁלֹמֹה הַמֶּלֶךְ. שֶׁכָּל מִי שֶׁחָס עַל עֲנִיִּים בִּרְצוֹן הַלֵּב, לֹא מִשְׁתַּנֶּה דְּיוֹקְנוֹ לְעוֹלָם מִדְּיוֹקֶן הָאָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן. וְכֵיוָן שֶׁהַדְּיוֹקֶן שֶׁל אָדָ״ם רְשׁוּמָה בּוֹ, שׁוֹלֵט עַל כָּל בְּרִיּוֹת הָעוֹלָם בְּאוֹתוֹ דְּיוֹקֶן. זֶה הוּא שֶׁכָּתוּב וּמוֹרַאֲכֶם וְחִתְּכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְגוֹמֵר. כּוּלָם רוֹעֲדִים וּפוֹחֲדִים מֵאוֹתוֹ דְּיוֹקֶן שֶׁנִּרְשַׁם בּוֹ, בִּגְלַל שֶׁזּוֹ הִיא מִצְוָה מְעוּלָה לַעֲלוֹת בֶּן אָדָם בְּדְיוֹקֶן שֶׁל אָדָם, עַל כָּל שְׁאָר מִצְוֹות.

מַלְכָּא לָנוּ מִנְּבוּכַדְנֶצַּר, אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁחָלַם אוֹתוֹ חֲלוֹם כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהָיָה חוֹנֵן לָעֲנִיִּים לֹא שָׁרָה עָלָיו חֲלוֹמוֹ. כֵּיוָן שֶׁהֵטִיל עַיִן רָעָה שֶׁלֹּא לְחוֹן לָעֲנִיִּים, מַה כָּתוּב עוֹד מִלְּתָא בְּפֻם מַלְכָּא (פי׳ עוֹד הַדָּבָר בְּפִי הַמֶּלֶךְ) וְגוֹמֵר מִיָּד הִשְׁתַּנָּה דְּיוֹקְנוֹ וְנִטְרַד מִן בְּנֵי אָדָם. וּבִגְלַל כָּךְ נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם. כָּתוּב כָּאן עֲשִׂיָּה, וְכָתוּב שָׁם שֶׁם הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי עִמּוֹ הַיּוֹם בֹּעַז:

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

The Zohar is in some ways the foundational work of the Kabbalah and one of the most influential works of Jewish tradition, both inside Judaism and outside it. The origins of the Zohar are unclear, but it seems likely that it was written over a few generations by a circle of Jewish mystics and scholars in Spain during the 13th century. One of the most important members was Rabbi Moshe de Leon (c. 1250–1305).

The Zohar is not a work seeking to collect and transmit information, but is rather a mystical endeavor seeking to evoke certain states and qualities of consciousness. Like the Talmud, learning Zohar is a Jewish text-based spiritual practice.

The medium of the Zohar is a mystically inspired weave of Jewish sacred texts. There are stories, visions, warnings, statements by God and angels, visitations from long-dead sages, miracles of all sorts, and many many interpretations of the Bible, the Talmud, the Midrashim, and Jewish mystical tradition. Our selection above is an analysis of Genesis 1:26, which then branches off in many directions…

"The ninth commandment: to be generous to the poor and provide them with food, for it is written: *Let us make a human being in our image, according to our likeness* (Genesis 1:26). *Let us make a human being*—jointly, including male and female;[708] *in our image*—the wealthy; *according to our likeness*—mystery of the poor.[709] For the wealthy derive from the side of the male, the poor from the side of the female. Just as they constitute a single partnership[710]—one caring for the other, providing for the other, and rendering goodness—so should the human beings below be rich and poor in a single bond, one providing for the other and rendering goodness.

"*They shall have dominion over the fish of the sea, [the birds of the sky, the animals, the whole earth, and all crawling things that crawl on earth]* (ibid.). This secret we have seen in *The Book of King Solomon:*[711] If one cares for the poor wholeheartedly, his image never mutates from that of Adam;[712] and since the image of Adam is impressed on him, he controls all creatures of the world,[713] as is written: *Fear and dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth [and upon all the birds of the sky, everything with which the earth teems and all the fish of the sea—into your hand they are given]* (ibid. 9:2). All of them fear and tremble from that image impressed on him because of all the commandments this[714] is the finest for attaining the image of one's Lord.

"How do we know? From Nebuchadnezzar. Even though he dreamed that dream,[715] as long as he was generous to the poor, his dream did not befall him.[716] As soon as he cast a stingy, evil eye, no longer acting generously to them,[717] what is written? *The word was still in the king's mouth, [when a voice fell from heaven, "To you it is decreed, O King Nebuchadnezzar: The kingdom has departed from you. You are being driven away from human beings, and your habitation shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be fed grass like cattle"]* (Daniel 4:28–29). Immediately his image mutated and he was banished from humankind.

"So, נעשה (*Na'aseh*), *Let us make, a human being [in our image]*. Here is written עשיה (*asiyyah*), *making*, and there is written: *The name of the man with whom* עשיתי (*asiti*), *I worked, today is Boaz* (Ruth 2:19).[718]

707. ***Cattle, crawling things, and living creatures...*** The continuation of the verse—which, according to Rabbi Shim'on, specifies various kinds of souls. See *Zohar* 1:47a.

708. **jointly...** The original human being was androgynous, engendered by the masculine and feminine aspects of the *sefirot*, *Tif'eret*, and *Shekhinah*, who together constitute the *image* and *likeness* of God.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1: "Rabbi Yirmeyah son of El'azar said, 'When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him androgynous, as is said: *Male and female He created them* (Genesis 1:27).' Rabbi Shemu'el son of Naḥamani said, 'When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him with two faces. Then He sawed him and gave him two backs, one on this side and one on that."

See BT *Berakhot* 61a; *Eruvin* 18a; Plato, *Symposium* 189d–191d; *Zohar* 1:47a; 2:55a; 3:5a, 44b; Matt, *Zohar*, 217.

709. ***in our image*—the wealthy...** *Our image* indicates *Tif'eret*, who transmits the rich flow of emanation to *Shekhinah*, *our likeness*, who "has nothing at all of Her own" (*Zohar* 1:181a). See 3:35b.

710. **Just as they...** As *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

711. ***The Book of King Solomon*** One of the many volumes housed in the real or imaginary library of the author of the *Zohar*. See above, note 684.

712. **his image...that of Adam** By fulfilling the *mitsvah* of caring for the poor, one imitates God and regains the pristine divine image in which Adam was created. See BT *Bava Batra* 58a; *Zohar* 1:71a.

713. **since the image of Adam...** See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 11: "[Adam] stood on his feet and was adorned with the divine image. The creatures saw him and were frightened, thinking that he was their Creator, and they all approached to bow down to him."

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:7: "It was taught: Before a person sins, he inspires awe and fear, and creatures are afraid of him. Once he sins, he is filled with awe and fear, and he is afraid of others." Cf. *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 50; and BT *Shabbat* 151b: "Rami son of Abba said, 'A wild beast has no power over a person until he appears to it as an animal.'"

See *Zohar* 1:38a, 71a, 191a, 221b; 2:55a, 125b; 3:107b; *ZḤ* 38c; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 337–38; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:119–20, n. 113.

714. **this** The commandment to care for the poor.

715. **dreamed that dream** According to Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon dreamed of a huge tree reaching to the sky, providing food for all creatures. A heavenly messenger then decrees that the tree be cut down and that Nebuchadnezzar share the grass of the earth with the beasts. The messenger adds: *Let his heart be changed from that of a human, and let him be given the heart of a beast* (4:13).

716. **as long as he was generous...** Daniel interpreted the dream to the king: *You will be driven away from human beings and have your habitation with the beasts of the field* (ibid., 22). He then advised him: *Redeem your sins by charity and your iniquities by generosity to the poor; then your serenity may be extended* (24). According to rabbinic tradition, the king followed Daniel's advice for one year.

See *Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim*, 25; *Tanḥuma, Mishpatim* 4; *Shemot Rabbah* 30:24; BT *Bava Batra* 4a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:423–24, n. 104.

717. **As soon as he cast a stingy, evil eye...** One year later King Nebuchadnezzar bragged *as he was walking on the roof of the royal palace...: "Is this not great Babylon, which I have built by my vast power to be a royal residence for the glory of my majesty!"* (Daniel 4:26–27). He decided against spending any more of his resources on the poor, and this selfish refusal ensured the fulfillment of his tragic dream.

718. ***with whom* עשיתי (*asiti*), *I worked...*** See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 34:8. The appearance of the verb עשה (*asah*), "to make, work," in both biblical verses implies a parallel: just as in the story of Ruth the verb indicates an act of generosity toward the poor, so, too, in the story of Creation. By accepting Boaz's generosity, Ruth "made" him a complete *man*. Generosity is inherent in the makeup of humanity, the clearest sign of our original divine nature.

The Zohar's Sources

Points to Consider

- Here are some of the sources that the Zohar wove together. Explore them, see how they are connected to each other. What themes did the Zohar choose? What did it do with them?

Genesis 1 26-27 2And God said‘ : Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth’. 27And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.	בראשית א (כו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בִדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל הָאָרֶץ׃ (כז) וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם׃
Pirkei DeRebbi Eliezer, Chapter 10 [FirstMan] stood on his feet and was in the image of God, and his height was from the East to the West, as it said "Thou hast hemmed me in behind and before" – "behind", this is the West, "before", this is the East. And all the creatures saw him and were afraid of him, for they thought that he was their creator, and they bowed down to him.	פרקי דרבי אליעזר (היגר) - ״חורב״ פרק י [אדם] קם על רגליו והיה בתואר כדמות אלהים, והיתה קומתו מן המזרח למערב, שנ׳ (תהילים קלט ה) אָחוֹר וָקֶדֶם צַרְתָּנִי, אחור זה מערב וקדם זה קדמה מזרחה, וראו אותו כל הבריות ונתייראו מלפניו סבורין שהוא בוראן ובאו להשתחוות לפניו.
Shir HaShirim Rabba, 3 5 It is taught, as long as a person does not sin, he arouses awe and fear and the creatures are afraid of him, when he sins, he is filled with awe and fear, and he is afraid of the others…R. Aybo said, at that hour [When FirstMan sinned], his height was cut down and he was 100 hand-lengths tall.	שיר השירים רבה (וילנא) פרשה ג ה תני עד שלא יחטא אדם נותנין לו אימה ויראה והבריות מתפחדין ממנו, כיון שהוא חוטא נותנין עליו אימה ויראה ומתפחד הוא מאחרים, תדע לך שכן אמר ר׳ עד שלא חטא אדם הראשון היה שומע קול הדיבור עומד על רגליו ולא היה מתייירא, כיון שחטא כששמע קול הדיבור נתיירא ונתחבא, שנא׳ (בראשית ג׳) את קולך שמעתי וגו׳ ויתחבא האדם, רבי איבו אמר באותה שעה נגרע גובה קומתו של אדם ונעשית של מאה אמה
Bavli Shabbat 151 b …said Rami Bar Aba: an animal cannot overcome a person until [that person] looks to him like an animal…	תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קנא עמוד ב דאמר רמי בר אבא : אין חיה שולטת באדם עד שנדמה לו כבהמה...

Daniel 4 16-29

(4-16) ¶ 19Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while, and his thoughts affrighted him. The king spoke and said: 'Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation, affright thee'. Belteshazzar answered and said': My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine adversaries.

(4-17) 20The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth;

(4-18) 21whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was food for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation;

(4-19) 22it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.

(4-20) 23And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, and saying: Hew down the tree, and destroy it; nevertheless leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even in a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him. [It also said in verse 13 above: "Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him."]

(4-21) 24this is the interpretation, O king, and it is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king,

(4-22) 25that thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen, and shalt be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee; till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.

(4-23) 26And whereas it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

(4-24) 27Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by almsgiving, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if there may be a lengthening of thy prosperity'.

(4-25) ¶ 28All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

(4-26) 29At the end of twelve months he was walking upon the royal palace of Babylon.

(4-27) 30The king spoke, and said': Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for a royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty'?

<u>דניאל פרק ד</u>

(טז) אֱדַיִן דָּנִיֵּאל דִּי שְׁמֵהּ בֵּלְטְשַׁאצַּר אֶשְׁתּוֹמַם כְּשָׁעָה חֲדָה וְרַעְיֹנֹהִי יְבַהֲלֻנֵּהּ עָנָה מַלְכָּא וְאָמַר בֵּלְטְשַׁאצַּר חֶלְמָא וּפִשְׁרָא אַל יְבַהֲלָךְ עָנֵה בֵלְטְשַׁאצַּר וְאָמַר מָרִי חֶלְמָא לְשָׂנְאָיךְ לְשָׁנְאָךְ וּפִשְׁרֵהּ לְעָרִיךְ לְעָרָךְ׃

(יז) אִילָנָא דִּי חָזַיְתָ דִּי רְבָה וּתְקֵף וְרוּמֵהּ יְמֵטֵא לִשְׁמַיָּא וַחֲזוֹתֵהּ לְכָל אַרְעָא׃

(יח) וְעָפְיֵהּ שַׁפִּיר וְאִנְבֵּהּ שַׂגִּיא וּמָזוֹן לְכֹלָּא בֵּהּ תְּחוֹתֹהִי תְּדוּר חֵיוַת בָּרָא וּבַעֲנָפוֹהִי יִשְׁכְּנָן צִפֳּרֵי שְׁמַיָּא׃

(יט) אנתה אַנְתְּ הוּא מַלְכָּא דִּי רבית רְבַת וּתְקַפְתְּ וּרְבוּתָךְ רְבַת וּמְטַת לִשְׁמַיָּא וְשָׁלְטָנָךְ לְסוֹף אַרְעָא׃

(כ) וְדִי חֲזָה מַלְכָּא עִיר וְקַדִּישׁ נָחֵת מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְאָמַר גֻּדּוּ אִילָנָא וְחַבְּלוּהִי בְּרַם עִקַּר שָׁרְשׁוֹהִי בְּאַרְעָא שְׁבֻקוּ וּבֶאֱסוּר דִּי פַרְזֶל וּנְחָשׁ בְּדַתְאָא דִּי בָרָא וּבְטַל שְׁמַיָּא יִצְטַבַּע וְעִם חֵיוַת בָּרָא חֲלָקֵהּ עַד דִּי שִׁבְעָה עִדָּנִין יַחְלְפוּן עֲלוֹהִי׃ [והוא אומר עוד לעיל בפסוק יג׃ לִבְבֵהּ מִן אנושא אֱנָשָׁא יְשַׁנּוֹן וּלְבַב חֵיוָה יִתְיְהִב לֵהּ וְשִׁבְעָה עִדָּנִין יַחְלְפוּן עֲלוֹהִי׃]

(כא) דְּנָה פִשְׁרָא מַלְכָּא וּגְזֵרַת עליא עִלָּאָה הִיא דִּי מְטַת עַל מראי מָרִי מַלְכָּא׃

(כב) וְלָךְ טָרְדִין מִן אֱנָשָׁא וְעִם חֵיוַת בָּרָא לֶהֱוֵה מְדֹרָךְ וְעִשְׂבָּא כְתוֹרִין לָךְ יְטַעֲמוּן וּמִטַּל שְׁמַיָּא לָךְ מְצַבְּעִין וְשִׁבְעָה עִדָּנִין יַחְלְפוּן עליך עֲלָךְ עַד דִּי תִנְדַּע דִּי שַׁלִּיט עליא עִלָּאָה בְּמַלְכוּת אֱנָשָׁא וּלְמַן דִּי יְצַבֵּא יִתְּנִנַּהּ׃

(כג) וְדִי אֲמַרוּ לְמִשְׁבַּק עִקַּר שָׁרְשׁוֹהִי דִּי אִילָנָא מַלְכוּתָךְ לָךְ קַיָּמָה מִן דִּי תִנְדַּע דִּי שַׁלִּטִן שְׁמַיָּא׃

(כד) לָהֵן מַלְכָּא מְלִכִי יִשְׁפַּר עליך עֲלָךְ וחטיך וַחֲטָאָךְ בְּצִדְקָה פְרֵק וַעֲוָיָתָךְ בְּמִחַן עֲנָיִן הֵן תֶּהֱוֵא אַרְכָה לִשְׁלֵוְתָךְ׃

(כה) כֹּלָּא מְטָא עַל נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מַלְכָּא׃ פ

(כו) לִקְצָת יַרְחִין תְּרֵי עֲשַׂר עַל הֵיכַל מַלְכוּתָא דִּי בָבֶל מְהַלֵּךְ הֲוָה׃

(כז) עָנֵה מַלְכָּא וְאָמַר הֲלָא דָא הִיא בָּבֶל רַבְּתָא דִּי אֲנָה בְנֵיתַהּ לְבֵית מַלְכוּ בְּתָקֶף חִסְנִי וְלִיקַר הַדְרִי׃

(כח) עוֹד מִלְּתָא בְּפֻם מַלְכָּא קָל מִן שְׁמַיָּא נָפַל לָךְ אָמְרִין נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מַלְכָּא מַלְכוּתָה עֲדָת מִנָּךְ׃

(כט) וּמִן אֱנָשָׁא לָךְ טָרְדִין וְעִם חֵיוַת בָּרָא מְדֹרָךְ עִשְׂבָּא כְתוֹרִין לָךְ יְטַעֲמוּן וְשִׁבְעָה עִדָּנִין יַחְלְפוּן עליך עֲלָךְ עַד דִּי תִנְדַּע דִּי שַׁלִּיט עליא עִלָּאָה בְּמַלְכוּת אֱנָשָׁא וּלְמַן דִּי יְצַבֵּא יִתְּנִנַּהּ׃

(4-28) 31While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven': O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: the kingdom is departed from thee.

(4-29) 32And thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee; until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will'.

Midrash Tanchumah, Mishpatim 4

Since Nebuchadnezzar understood the dream and its meaning, he said to Daniel, what do you suggest I do? Daniel said: those poor folks that you exiled from their home are hungry and thirsty and naked, open your treasure houses and take care of them, perhaps you can heal the dream, as it is said, **"and break off thy sins by almsgiving, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if there may be a lengthening of thy prosperity"...** Immediately, the wicked one opened his treasure houses and distributed to them for twelve months. After twelve months the wicked one forgot the dream, and he was walking about on his castle and he heard the voices of many poor folk crying out before his treasure house. He said to his servants, what is this voice that I hear? They said to him: the poor that you exiled are calling for their sustenance, immediately he was filled with evil, **"The king spoke, and said‘ :Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for a royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty’?"** He said, if it was note for my wealth how would I build this whole state?! He commanded and they cut them [the poor] off, as it is said, "**While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven‘ :O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: the kingdom is departed from thee**." God said to him: Wicked one! what has caused you quiet [spared you] all these twelve months? The charity you have performed…

<u>מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת משפטים סימן ד</u>

כיון שראה נבוכדנצר את החלום ופתרונו התחיל לומר לדניאל מה אתה יועצני. אמר ליה הללו עניים שהגלית מארצם רעבים וצמאים ערומים פתח להם אוצרותיך ופרנס אותם אולי תרפא את החלום שנאמר (דניאל ד׳:כד) לָהֵן מַלְכָּא מְלִכִּי יִשְׁפַּר עליך עֲלָךְ וחטיך חַטָאָךְ בְּצִדְקָה פְרֻק וַעֲוָיָתָךְ בְּמְחַן עֲנָיִן הֵן תֶּהֱוֵא אַרְכָה לִשְׁלֵוְתָךְ, וכי תעלה על דעתך שדניאל הצדיק היה משיא עצה כזו לנבוכדנצר שונאו של מקום אלא לפי שראה את ישראל שלפי גולה מטולטלים דווים ברעב לפיכך השיאו עצה כזו ברחמנותו עליהם לפי שהיה יודע שלסוף נפשו קניטא, מיד פתח אותו רשע אוצרותיו וחלק להם י״ב חדש. לאחר י״ב חדש שכח אותו רשע את החלום והתחיל לטייל על פלטרין שלו שמע קול המון צעקת העניים לפני אוצרותיו. אמר לעבדיו מה קול זה שאני שומע, אמרו לו העניים שהגלית תובעים פרנסתם, מיד נכנס בו עין רעה, (ד׳:כז) עָנֵה מַלְכָּא וְאָמַר הֲלָא דָא הִיא בָּבֶל רַבְּתָא דִּי אֲנָה בְנֵיתַהּ לְבֵית מַלְכוּ בְּתָקֶף חִסְנִי וְלִיקָר הַדְרִי. אמר אילולי בית הממון שלי מהיכן אני בונה המדינה הזו כולה, צוה ופסק להם שנאמר (ד כח) עוֹד מִלְּתָא בְּפֻם מַלְכָּא [קָל מִן שְׁמַיָּא נְפַל לָךְ אָמְרִין נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מַלְכָּא מַלְכוּתָה עֲדָת מִנָּךְ] אמר ליה הקב״ה רשע מי גרם לך שלוה כל אותן י״ב חדש הלא הצדקה שעשית, ומה אומות העולם כך ישראל על אחת כמה וכמה לכך נאמר כה אמר ה׳ שמרו משפט ועשו צדקה (ישיהו נו)

Ruth 2 19

19And her mother-in-law said unto her‘ :Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest [maketh] thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee ’.And she told her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought [maketh], and said‘ :The man’s name with whom I wrought [made] to-day is Boaz’.

<u>רות פרק ב פסוק יט</u>

וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ חֲמוֹתָהּ אֵיפֹה לִקַּטְתְּ הַיּוֹם וְאָנָה עָשִׂית יְהִי מַכִּירֵךְ בָּרוּךְ וַתַּגֶּד לַחֲמוֹתָהּ אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשְׂתָה עִמּוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר שֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי עִמּוֹ הַיּוֹם בֹּעַז׃

Vayikra Rabba 34 Taught R. Yoshua: More than what the charitable one does for the poor one, the poor one does for the charitable one, as Ruth said to Naomi "the man's name with whom I made with today is Boaz". "That made with me today", it doesn't say, rather "that I made with today", she said to her: I did much good by him [for him] through the bread that he gave me.	<u>ויקרא רבה (וילנא) פרשה לד</u> תני ר' יהושע יותר ממה שבעל הבית עושה עם העני העני עושה עם בעל הבית שכן רות אומרת לנעמי (רות ב) שם האיש אשר עשיתי עמו היום בועז אשר עשה עמי אין כתיב כאן אלא אשר עשיתי עמו אמרה לה הרבה פעולות וטובות עשיתי עמו היום בשביל פרוסה שנתן לי.
Breshit Rabba 22 2 (trans. Soncino with changes) Ishmael asked R. Akiba: 'Since you have served Nahum of Gimzo for twenty-two years, [and he taught], Every ach and rak is a limitation, while every et and gam is an extension, tell me what is the purpose of the et written here?' ' If it said, " I have gotten a man the Lord," ' he, replied,' it would have been difficult [to interpret]… Rather, *ET* THE LORD [teaches this]: In the past, Adam was created from the ground, and Eve from Adam; but henceforth it shall be, In our image, after our likeness (Gen. I, 26): neither man without woman nor woman without man, nor both of them without the Shechinah.	<u>בראשית רבה כב ב – Breshit Rabba 22 2</u> [בראשית ד א: וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת יְקֹוָק] רבי ישמעאל שאל את רבי עקיבא, אמר לו בשביל ששימשת נחום איש גם זו עשרים ושתים שנה, אכין ורקין מיעוטים, אתין וגמין רבויים, האי את דכתיב הכא מהו? אמר, אלו נאמר קניתי איש ה' היה הדבר קשה, אלא את ה'...לשעבר אדם נברא מאדמה, וחוה נבראת מאדם, מכאן ואילך בצלמנו כדמותנו, לא איש בלא אשה ולא אשה בלא איש, ולא שניהם בלא שכינה.





ADAM

aspects of

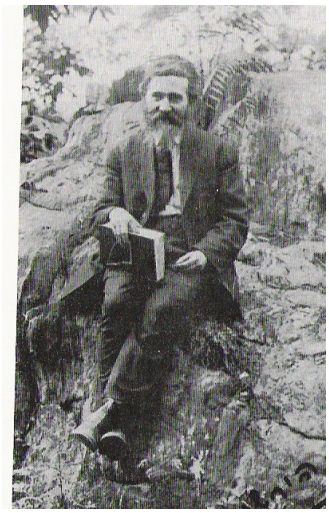
The Divine Human Image

7. Halacha: Human Rights as the Law of God

Source 1.

סברת כת"ר [כבוד תורתו] בחלוקו בין ז' מצות ב"נ [בני נח] למצות בני ישראל כי יסוד כונת ז' מצות בני נח הוא תיקון המדינה ואחוות בני אדם, ויסוד מצוות ישראל הוא להתנהג על פי כונת רוח התורה[,] החלוק הוא נכון מאד כאשר באר כת"ר בארוכה, אבל...לא נפחת חובת ישראל לאחוות המדינה ותיקונה מן חובת בני נח לזה אם נוסף לישראל חובה לעשות כרוח התורה...[כלומר, אין היהודי] נפטר מחובתו להאנושי[ו]ת ח"ו [חס ושלום] כזאת לא יאמר, רק שע"י התורה נתקשר בקאנסטיטושאן מיוחד איך לשמור את חובותיו להאנוש[ו]ת בכלל ולעמו ולאלהיו בפרט...

(מכתב אל הרב מיכאל ליכטענשטיין, 1921, מופיע במלכי בקדש, כרך ד', עמ' 124.)



Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn (1857-1935) was a scholar of Talmud and Jewish law, a theologian and an early religious-Zionist thinker. In thousands of pages of Biblical and Talmudic interpretation, halachic argumentation and theological explorations, he integrates modern insights about democracy, humanism and the sciences into the depth of Torah tradition. See the discussion of his ideas beginning on pg. 68.

You suggested in your analysis that we must distinguish between the seven Noachide laws, which are primarily concerned with [establishing] good government and the kinship of humanity, and the Commandments of Israel, which are concerned with behaving according to the spirit of the Torah. This distinction is true as you made clear in your extensive discussion…however, [when Israel received the Torah and the Jews were no longer obligated by the "seven Noachide Laws" and became obligated instead by the Torah] that did not lessen the obligation of Israel to foster a feeling of kinship among people and to seek good government in comparison to the children of Noach, but rather Israel carries an additional obligation to act in the spirit of the Torah…[that is to say that the Jew is not] removed from his obligation towards humanity, God forbid - such a thing cannot be said!, but rather through the Torah he is bound by a special constitution determining how he fulfils his obligation to humanity in general, and to his people and God in particular…

(Letter to Rabbi Michael Lictenstein, 1921, appears in Malki BaKodesh, Vol. 4, pg. 124.

Points to Consider

- How does R. Hirschensohn understand the relation between Israel and Humanity?
- What is the meaning of the Noachide Laws and how is Israel involved in them?

Source 2.

[Introduction to Source 2: The words "you shall not leave one soul alive" (Deut. 20:16) have traditionally been understood to command genocide against the seven nations of the Land of Israel if they refuse to vacate the land or accept slavery to the Jews. The Rambam rules that even though the seven nations no longer exist, if they did, we would be commanded to kill them even today: "anyone who meets one of them and doesn't kill him has violated a negative commandment as it is written, 'you will not leave one soul alive'" (Hilchot Shoftim 5:4). R. Hirschensohn addresses what this means for the modern Jewish State. The following selections are drawn from ***Eleh Divrei Habrit****, Vol. 1, pg. 69ff]*



War Crimes, Genocide & Crimes against Humanity is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed scholarly journal dedicated to understanding the conceptualization, etiology, and prevention of violations of international criminal and humanitarian law.

It is forbidden for the People Israel to violate international laws even when they contradict Jewish law …there is no longer any obligation of "you will leave no soul alive", even if we knew that our enemies were from those seven nations, and not only is there no obligation upon us it is also forbidden to violate international law that was covenanted upon in the covenants of peoples [about] how to act in war, and God forbid that Israel should be considered in the eyes of the nations as wild-men murdering people in opposition to international laws and in opposition to the laws of civilization…

And in any case, desecrating God's name in the eyes of the nations is as forbidden as [desecrating God's name] in the eyes of Israel, and there is no desecration of God's name that is greater than violating international law by "not leaving one soul alive"…

And in light of all this, even if Sanheriv had not mixed up all the nations and the seven nations were in the Land of Israel and we were at war with them, we would not "utterly obliterate them" so to "leave no soul alive" because these are not commandments for all generations as I have explained, and it is in opposition to the laws of the nations, and we are forbidden from doing so, and there is no atonement for desecrating God's name…

And after this introduction we know that in the times of the Mashiach even if there are [people] from the seven nations in the Land, even if we know their ancestry, we will not "utterly destroy them", but rather if they don't seek our detriment we will live with them in peace. And there is no doubt that there will be [people] from all of these nations in the Land, even though Sanheriv the King of Assyria came and mixed up all the nations (Yadayim 4:4), this doesn't mean that none of them were left…

Points to Consider

- Do you see a connection between R. Hirschensohn's statements in Source 1, above, and his position in regard to genocide and international law in Source 2?

Source 3.

Malki Bakodesh, Part One, Question 2

מלכי בקדש, חלק א', שאלה ב'

Its not far out to think that this period [the establishment of modern Israel] is the one about which Isaiah prophesied "In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord's house shall stand firm above the mountains, and tower above the hills, and all the nations shall stream towards it" …for Torah and for illumination…

ולא רחוק לחשוב כי על העת הזאת נבא ישעיהו "כי נכון יהיה הר בית ה' בראש ההרים ונשא מגבעות וינהרו אליו כל הגוים...לתורה ואורה ללמוד מדרכיו ולילך באורחותיו...

and this is because in this House will be the Hall of Peace - but not like the Hall of Peace in the Hague, where the peace representatives bow down before the glory of those whose power casts its shadow over the world of life, and any hint that some ruler has done injustice is considered a rebellion. And it will be more than the League of Nations established by the "father of national morality" President Wilson, which in any case has more good will than legal power,

אין זאת כי אם שבבית הזה יהיה היכל השלום, אך לא היכל השלום כאשר "בהאג" אשר צירי השלום כרעו והשתחוו ביראת הכבוד לפני הנותנים חִתִּיתָם בארץ החיים, וכל רמז של אי צדק למי ממלכי ארץ נחשב כמרד. גם יותר יהיה מאגודת העמים (ליג אף ניישאנס) אשר הציע "אבי המוסר הלאומי" פרזידנט ווילסאן, אשר עכ"פ יהיה בו רצון עמי האגודה יותר חזק מן עומק הדין,

but rather it will be the "Court of Nations" which will judge the peoples in justice and the nations with righteousness…and the corrupted idea that nationalism justifies iniquity and evil will be banished, and there will be justice for every nation and for every individual, for each one has the right to develop in his own unique way, but without damaging his fellow, and there will be no more oppression…nation shall not take up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore…

רק יהיה "היכל משפט העמים" (קארט אף ניישאנס) אשר ישפוט עמים בצדק ולאומים במשרים, והזדון לא ימשול עוד בארץ, ותתבטל הדעה הנשחתה כי לטובת הלאומיות מותר לעשות זדון ורשע, וצדק כל עם יהיה שוה לצדק כל איש אשר לכל אחד יש לו הזכות להתפתח לפי תכונותיו אף לא ליגע בזכות חברו, ולא ימשול איש באיש ולא עם בעם ולא עם באיש ולא איש בעם לרע לו ע' קהלת ח:ט, לא ישא גוי אל גוי חרב ולא ילמדו עוד מלחמה...

Points to Consider

- And our prophet Isaiah appears again! How does R. Hirschensohn understand the prophetic vision? Think back to the stages that we've seen (Talmud: the Rule of Law and Maimonides: the Purpose of the Human Species.)

8. Rav Kook: Zionism in the Service of Humanity

Points to Consider

- Rav Kook lays out in this essay a number of interlocking ideas. First, there is an analysis of how transcendent spirit operates in "the individual, the nation, the world and all existence". He then goes on to use his analysis of the operation of spirit to explain Jewish history and the state of Jewish culture in his day (such as the rise of secularism).
- The way to read Rav Kook is paragraph by paragraph. After each paragraph, try to state his main point in your own words.
- Paragraphs 1-3 are very difficult and abstract. Here Rav Kook lays out the theory that he uses to explain Jewish history and the state of Jewish culture in paragraphs 4-9. I suggest that you skip the theory and begin by reading paragraphs 4-9. Go back to paragraphs 1-3 if you have time.

An Essay from Orot, "Lights", by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook

(trans. by Ben Zion Bokser)

The Soul Of The Nation And Its Body

1. There must necessarily be a gap between the abstract, ideal content of the universal objective and its expression in reality, between the good intention that inspires a person at the heights of his spiritual life and the spirit that is with him always, to guide his way and his behavior. Were it not for this difference in gradation the pattern of behavior would become blurred, existence could not retain its stability, there would be no fixed rules or boundaries. The particular programs and goals that are the foundation of the world and the fullness therefore could not exist.

2. When the lofty ideals that have their being in a state of non-determination, in the roots of the soul and its basic aspirations, become confined within a particular boundary, they at once lose their ardor and descend from the heights of their potency. They gain a practical advantage and become accessible to effectuation through their limitation, but they lose the higher purity they had before their incarnation within their assigned form. Their light has dimmed; at times it loses much of its brightness, reaching a point of near darkness out of its functional necessity. Then the ideals carry this mission: after they have entered the practical world, to return to that level of loftiness and purity and to that majesty of scope and quality which they had while they were being shaped in the realm of the imagination. The success of this process will depend on the extent of the light's materialization. If it has not been overly materialized and if it has not descended too far from its lofty heights, then the road of the higher penitence will be open, and the ideals will readily find a clear pathway leading back to their spiritual essence.

3. But even [when the process is not successful and the light is greatly diminished]…The light will then release its rays in delimited measure, and they will make their way at a slow pace. They will send flashes across the boundaries and they will release sparks time after time from the original exalted light of eternity. From the abstract goals there will reach out channels to carry the dew of a higher life within the boundaries, the particularized forms, and this dew is the dew of light and it will banish the darkness and illumine life. Then will the world be built anew, heaven and earth will

kiss, and the joy of creation will become manifest. This process is at work in the case of the individual, the nation, the world and all existence.



Rabbi Abraham Kook (1865–1935). One of the most powerful forces in religious Zionism and in Twentieth century Judaism altogether. First Ashkanazi Chief Rabbi of Israel. See an additional selection from his writing on pg. 48-49.

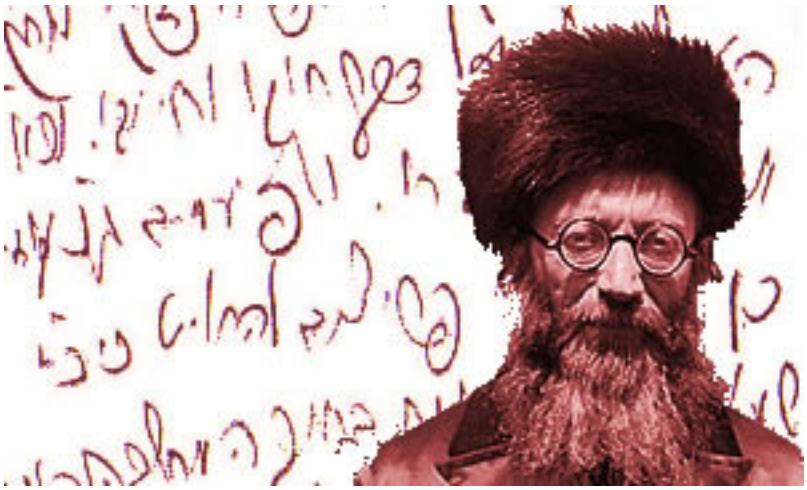
4. The love for the nation, or, more broadly, for humanity, is adorned at its source with the purest ideals, which reflect humanity and nationhood in their noblest light. In the conceptual world these are entities full of majesty and beauty, delight and life, mercy and truth, justice and humility, valor and joy, intelligence and feeling. They are in a state of continuing progress, which brings joy to every noble heart. This is how they appear in the conceptual world. But when they enter the world of action, and are set within boundaries, at once some elements of the higher light disappear. The large *aleph* becomes a small *aleph.* The obstructions of life multiply. The agitation of anger and fear, of hostilities and arrogance, grow and fill the atmosphere. Humanity, on the practical level, robes itself in soiled garments; its many lights fall into hard shells in which it is wrapped. The one who loves it as it is will be unable to rise toward a higher life. He is rather likely to absorb into himself the filth accumulated within it than the holy sparks hidden in its secret places. The same applies to the status of a particular nationalism, which includes also our own nation.

5. Inestimably beautiful is the ideal of establishing a chosen people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, out of a people sunk in frightful servitude, the brilliance of whose patriarchal origin shall illumine its darkness. In the divine heights, this ideal abides in the secret hiding place in its purity. But it must be materialized, set within a particular boundary, among people with good and also evil passions, in communities in need of sustenance, of gaining a foothold on the land, of governmental authority. The collective life must allow room for everybody, from the heights of people of pure spirit and refined souls to the lowland of inferior people who are bound to pursue the lower aspects of existence. Mortal eyes, bleary, lose all their brightness, the spiritual dimension becomes enslaved and darkened in the darkness of life, which abounds with filth and refuse. Humanity in its limited form, which is pervaded with abominations more than with refinement and light, is therefore likely to influence its devotees with evil and gross darkness. This is the source of the evil in liberalism. And when the particular nationalisms robed themselves in the thick garments of worldliness, humanity, too, descended from its heights. The nationhood of the Jewish people was broken so that it ceased functioning, and what is left is only the highest dimension of its basic conception, hidden in the ideal of reviving the nation in the highest dimension of its purity.

6. Streams of light can descend from this august position to revive the edifice of the nation to its original scope, its scope at the beginning of its existence. By drawing on this higher, divine influence, the nation's worldly garments can also be restored. But if a person should wish to

embrace the nation in its decadent condition, in its coarser aspects, without inner illumination from its ancient, higher light, he will soon take into himself filth and lowliness and elements of evil that will turn to bitterness in a short span of history of but a few generations. This is the vision of the evil kind of nationalism that we encounter.

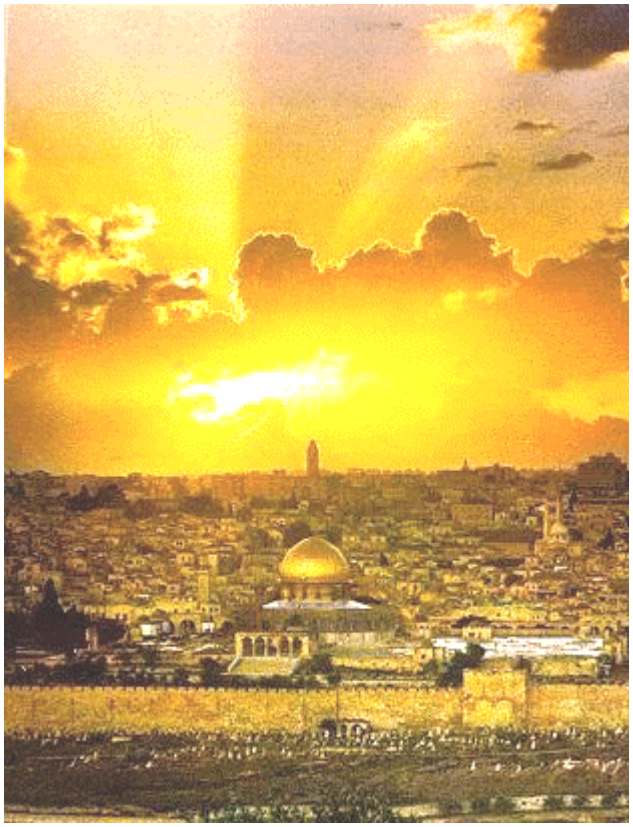
7. But in the end the general love of humanity will overcome the evil surrounding it, and the basic love of nationhood, of the community of Israel, will destroy all its thorny elements, and she will draw from the divine source, as in her bridal days. She will be planted again in the place that has been her home, with a great wealth of her authentic characteristics, of practical self-limitation, and of many marks and imprints that will enrich her image. Her broken vessels will be mended, the sparks of purity that have been scattered will be gathered together, one by one. From the general ideal realm of existence will the light of Israel again be manifest, and, by its purity and might, restore the purity of the human ideal. The rose of Sharon [i.e. Israel], rooted in eternal righteousness, will blossom, and shed its light and splendor to all sides.



From www.kipa.co.il/jew/52940.html

8. This divine spirit exists in the community of Israel in the most secret concealment, in the holy of holies, in the dark zones where faith in God is hidden, robed in the garment of the Jewish religion. The delusion of centering our religion on its outer forms, which, because of its weakness of perception, despises all the wealth in the mystical realm, has darkened the eyes and reduced our spiritual vision by building a wall of dross for the free spirit. It has created a filthy atmosphere for the rise of the crude heresy in its despicable form in which we encounter it in our time. When this outlook is applied to nationalism, it chooses precisely its worst elements, those likely to corrupt everything noble in the image of the individual, whose path is meant to point toward God. Without the dew of life in the love of God, of a noble reverence abounding with discernment and knowledge, and a life-faith pulsating with freedom, nationalism must take its path to pick grains from the animal dung of an inferior nation. In a gloomy spirit, full of anger and sickness, it will pride itself in the outwardness of a language whose mighty holiness it does not recognize, of a land from whose wondrous qualities it is alienated, of nostalgic yearnings from which it has discarded every element that can nourish and vitalize. The adherents of such a nationalism will be disdainful of a nationalism the nobler and the more spiritual it is at its source, and they will contaminate it with the filth of their own impurity. There is no faith, there is no fear of God, there is no moral grandeur and no heroism of spirit—and what life can be revived by it?

9. This is the narrow state to which the community of Israel will descend prior to an awakening to the true revival. On awakening she will thrust aside with decided indignation all her dross, and with a divine resoluteness she will gather to herself all her good. From the holy heights she will restore to life all her treasures, and all her precious possessions will shine with



a higher illumination. The sounds of song, the majesty of the holy tongue, the beauty of our precious land, which was chosen by God, the ecstasy of heroism and holiness, will return to the mountains of Zion. With the cleansing potency of the original soul of our people, with hidden divine influences and with the light of mercy and a higher pleasure hidden within it, will they come and also cleanse all the outer garments in which the soul and spirit of the nation robed itself. From the source of higher delight will flow many spices to remove the filthy smell that was absorbed by the crude nationalism enclosed in its materialism. And as smoke fades away so will fade away all the destructive winds that have filled the land, the language, the history, and the literature. "I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle on you clean water and you will be clean from all your defilements; from all your abominations will I cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and I will place in you a new spirit; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put My spirit within you, and I will cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My laws and do them. And you will dwell in the land I gave to your ancestors, and you will be My people and I will be your God" (Ezek. 36:24-29).

A Fourfold Song (Orot Hakodesh, Vol. II, pg. 458-9)

יש שהוא שר **שירת נפשו**,
ובנפשו הוא מוצא את הכל, את מלא הסיפוק הרוחני במילואו.

ויש שהוא שר **שירת האומה**,
יוצא הוא מתוך המעגל של נפשו הפרטית, שאינו מוצא אותה מרוחבת כראוי ולא מיושבת ישוב אידיאלי, שואף למרומי עז, והוא מתדבק באהבה עדינה עם כללותה של כנסת ישראל, ועמה הוא שר את שיריה, מצר בצרותיה, ומשתעשע בתקוותיה, הוגה דעות עליונות וטהורות על עברה ועל עתידה, וחוקר באהבה ובחכמת לב את תוכן רוחה הפנימי.

ויש אשר עוד תתרחב נפשו עד שיוצא ומתפשט מעל גבול ישראל, לשיר את
שירת האדם,
רוחו הולך ומתרחב בגאון כללות האדם והוד צַלְמוֹ,
שואף אל תעודתו הכללית ומצפה להשתלמותו העליונה, וממקור חיים זה הוא שואב את כללות הגיונותיו ומחקריו, שאיפותיו וחזיונותיו.

ויש אשר עוד מזה למעלה ברוחב יתנשא, עד שמתאחד עם כל היקום כולו,
עם כל הבריות, ועם כל העולמים,
ועם כולם אומר שירה,
זה הוא העוסק בפרק שירה בכל יום שמובטח לו שהוא בן העולם הבא.

ויש אשר עולה עם כל השירים הללו ביחד באגודה אחת, וכולם נותנים את קולותיהם, כולם יחד מנעימים את זמריהם, וזה לתוך זה נותן לְשַׁד וחיים, קול ששון וקול שמחה, קול צהלה וקול רנה, קול חדוה וקול קדושה.
שירת הנפש,
שירת האומה,
שירת האדם,
שירת העולם,
כולן יחד מתמזגות בקרבו בכל עת ובכל שעה. והתמימות הזאת במילואה עולה היא להיות שירת קודש, שירת אל, שירת ישראל, בעוצם עזה ותפארתה, בעוצם אמתה וגדלה,
ישראל שיר אל,
שיר פשוט, שיר כפול, שיר משולש, שיר מרובע.
שיר השירים אשר לשלמה, למלך שהשלום שלו.

A Fourfold Song

Trans. based on Ben Zion Bokser

There is one who sings **the song of his own life**,
and in himself he finds everything, his full spiritual satisfaction.

There is another who sings **the song of his people**.
He leaves the circle of his own individual self, because he finds it without sufficient breadth, without an idealistic basis. He aspires towards the heights, and he attaches himself with a gentle love to the whole community of Israel. Together with her he sings her song. He feels grieved in her afflictions and delights in her hopes. He contemplates noble and pure thoughts about her past and her future, and probes with love and wisdom her inner spiritual essence.

There is another who reaches toward more distant realms,
and he goes beyond the boundary of Israel to sing
the song of humanity.
His spirit extends to the wider vistas of the totality of humanity, to the glory of her divine image. He aspires toward humanity's total goal and looks toward her higher perfection. From this source of life he draws the subjects of his meditation and study, his aspirations and his visions.

Then there is one who rises toward wider horizons, until he links himself with all existence, with all God's creatures, with all worlds,
and he sings his song with all of them.
It is of one such as this that tradition has said that whoever sings
a portion of the song each day is assured of having a share in the world to come.

And then there is one who rises with all these songs in one ensemble, and they all join their voices. Together they sing their songs with beauty, each one lends vitality and life to the other. They are
sounds of joy and gladness,
sounds of jubilation and celebration,
sounds of ecstasy and holiness.

The song of the self,
the song of the people,
the song of humanity,
the song of the world,

all merge in him at all times, in every hour.
And this full comprehensiveness rises to become the song of holiness, the song of God, the song of Israel, in its full strength and beauty, in it full authenticity and greatness.
The name "Israel" stands for
shir el,
the song of God.
It is a simple song, a twofold song, a threefold song and a fourfold song.
It is the Song of Songs of Solomon, shlomo, which means peace or wholeness.
It is the song of the King that wholeness is His.

9. Implications: Human Rights as Religious Praxis

The Torah of Human Rights is a program in Jewish Human Rights Education, and it has two central goals:

The first goal is to deepen the roots of the participants in Torah tradition while energizing them to get personally involved in human rights activism. The combination of deep learning of sacred texts with personal involvement in achieving God's will for humanity unleashes powerful forces for self-transformation, both as individuals and collectively.

The second goal is that - for those interested in doing so - participants go out into the world and teach their own version of the Torah of Human Rights. Since it is not a fixed course but rather an ongoing *seder limmud* (order of religious study), each person needs to make it their own by choosing sources and interpreting them.

Jewish Human Rights Education approaches human rights through the prism of Jewish tradition, but it is open to all cultures and religions. Everyone is invited to participate in exploring how Jewish tradition can help reveal the **divine** meaning of achieving **human** rights. Participants are welcome to use and change the source materials and the ideas in any way they like, including incorporating them into other religions. The goal is to weave a human mosaic from the materials of all the world's religions giving expression to the divine imperative to protect and nurture all human beings through the global rule of law. The Torah of Human Rights is meant as one piece of that cloth.

During the last class of the program we will sum up the basic themes of the Torah of Human Rights as we learned it, and then have an open group discussion (and a drink) focusing on the following themes:

Are you interested in teaching this Torah or some version of it?

Do you want to do something else with it?

Are there other responses or ideas or projects that you'd like to raise for group discussion?

I suggest you think about these questions from the beginning of the course, and jot down your ideas as we go through the materials. I would be happy to help you adapt these materials for your purpose if I can. Contact me at shaiyarothberg@gmail.com.

The Torah of Human Rights

Summary of Conceptual Framework

Part One: Evolution, Religion and Human Rights

Evolution

We begin the *seder limmud* (order of study) of the Torah of Human Rights by exploring some stories about human evolution. According to one version[1], before human beings could talk (about 70,000 years ago) they could only cooperate with 150 other people that they knew personally. Anybody that they didn't know personally was a lethal competitor. But when people started to talk, they told stories about who they are and where they come from, and these stories also embodied norms of behavior; what was acceptable and what was not acceptable among those that tell the story. People who shared the same story were transformed from lethal competitors to part of "us", even if you had never met them. As empires grew and stories spread, millions of people came to share stories that tied them together, as well as setting them against everyone else.

Today, hundreds of millions of human beings share stories that are so powerful that those who tell them are willing to invest huge amounts of their own resources in solidarity with people that they will not only never meet, but are so many that they could never imagine them. For example, when Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey in 2012, hundreds of millions of American citizens thought it natural that money collected from them should go to caring for the victims. That's because those people *share a story* about being "citizens" of a common "country". From 150 hunter-gatherers to hundreds of millions; from the pooled resources of a tribe to the colossal resources at the disposal of today's superpowers: The stories that Homo sapiens tell about themselves are some of the most powerful things in the world. They have transformed the reality on our planet - for human beings and for all life - many times before, and they can transform it again.

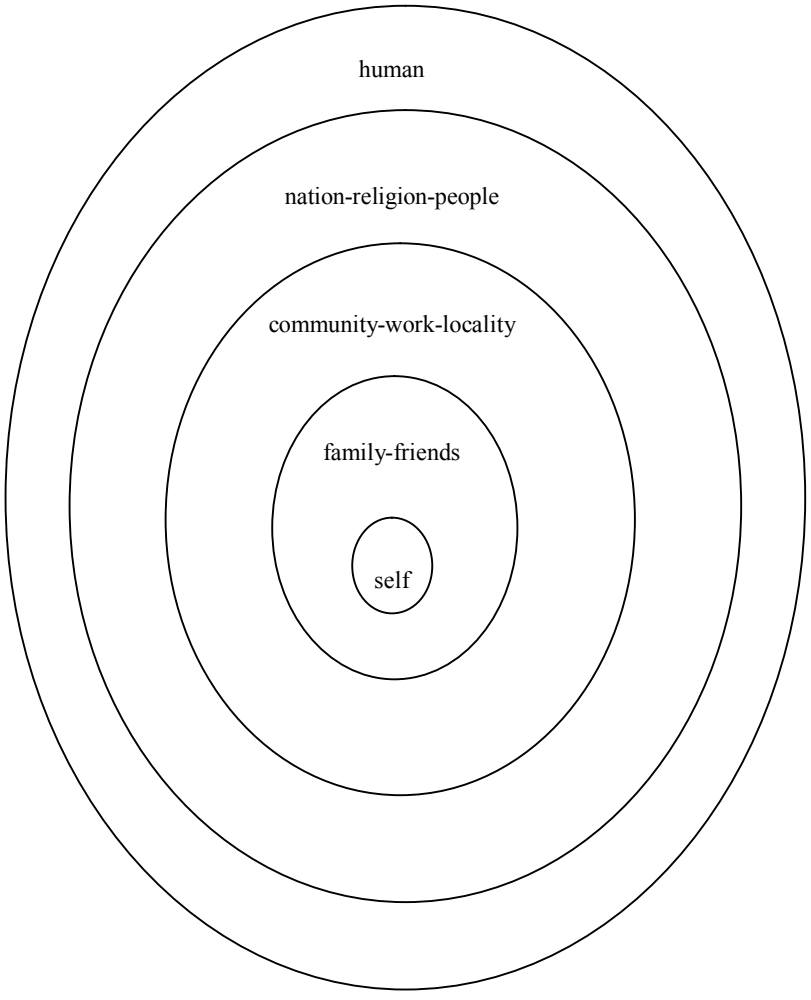
Today, global humanity looks more like a colossal failed state than like a superpower. Billions of humans across the globe fall victim to poverty and injustice. We as a species wield vast resources capable of transforming the global reality, but we choose not to invest our wealth in protecting human beings. If ever there will be a global order that could reasonably be called "human civilization", I believe that they will look back at our period as the tail-end of the barbaric *pre-history* of that civilization. But don't miss the optimism in that statement: I say we're at the *tail-end* because never before in the history of our species has humanity been closer to achieving global justice. Roughly half of humanity lives in at least flawed democracies (Economist Index), and the degree of agreement and cooperation around basic norms (such as human rights) is unprecedented.

[1] Yuval Harari, **Homo Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind** (The original is in Hebrew. Amazon says that the English version is coming out soon.)

For the first time, a just world order for all people has begun to come into view. That doesn't mean we'll see it any time soon, or ever. But the point at which we stand now is without precedent in the history of our species.

There are a host of reasons why we are at the tail-end of the barbaric pre-history of human civilization, rather than having already achieved it. I believe that one important reason for our failure at this stage is that we as a species don't yet share a sufficiently powerful *human* story. While a new species-wide human identity is emerging everywhere (human rights being one of its most important expressions), our human identity-story is still not strong enough to motivate us to invest sufficient global resources in protecting human beings. We have to grow that story stronger.

One way to think about our identity-building stories is that they grow on top of each other like the layers of an onion[2]:



These "rings of identity" are just examples. I assume that there are a limitless number of meaningful ways to think about human identity. But I think there's truth in the structure presented here: The identity ring nearest to us involves the people we actually know personally. In this way, we're still like our pre-language ancestors of old. But we also have larger rings of identity opened up to us by

[2] In addition to Yuval Harari, my thinking about evolution, human identity and a host of other things follows (more or less) Ken Wilber in A Brief History of Everything and in Sex, Ecology and Evolution and also Jean Gebser in The Ever-Present Origin.

our story-telling ability. Our shared stories enable us to live in a larger community of people who we don't know personally but whose lives we overlap in our places of work, entertainment, houses of worship and the like. For most people, beyond that identity ring is a much bigger one that often includes hundreds of millions of other people, and that involves stories about nations, religions, peoples and so forth. These giant identity rings are abstract in the sense that we can't even imagine numbers of people so big, let alone meet them. And yet when we run into them we recognize them as story-members rather than lethal competitors and enemies. Examples of big identity rings like these are American citizenship and Jewish Peoplehood.

I believe that a larger human-level identity ring is emerging across the peoples and cultures of the globe. It expresses itself in international law, in global civil society, in arts and entertainment, and it is both a cause and effect of globalization. But the power of this ring of our identity is still not strong enough: Locally, we victimize those with foreign stories (i.e. the Israelis and the Arabs towards each other). Globally, we remain brutally indifferent to vast human suffering outside the tent of our identity structure. We need to empower the *human* ring in the identity structures of our species.

Empowering the human element of identity does not mean giving up the more particularistic inner identities. In fact, sometimes an outer (more inclusive) identity *empowers* an inner (more particularistic) identity. For example, many people who embrace Jewish religion (an outer identity-ring including millions of fellow story-tellers) find that this strengthens their family life (with just a handful of fellow story-tellers). That's because there's a special connection between the *Jewish* and *family* rings of identity. I think that a similar special connection exists between the *Jewish* and *human* rings of identity, as we'll see throughout this course. So becoming more human doesn't necessarily mean becoming less something else.

But at the same time, when we invite the members of our species to deepen their human identities, we are not offering them something culturally neutral. For example, ultra-nationalist, racist and supremacist versions of the national-religious-ethnic identity ring(s) may contradict a larger human story. For a person committed to these very particularistic stories, adapting them to be more *human* can involve the loss of aspects of their culture and identity that they care a lot about. When we turn to our fellow human beings and ask them to deepen their human identity, we are asking them to change their very identity - who they think they are. What gives us the right to make such a request? And what exactly are we asking for?

The circumstances behind the request answer both questions. In the face of humanity's vast and unthinkable suffering, we turn to all the living members of our species and ask: Are you not horrified as billions are devoured by poverty and oppression? Will you join a species-wide attempt to agree on basic norms to protect and nurture humanity? Will you help direct global resources towards making those norms a reality? We have not a *right*, but an *obligation*, to make this request on all human beings. And what we are *asking for* is simply full and equal participation in that project: agreeing on norms and enforcing them. That is the practical meaning of a more powerful

human story. (And I think that is exactly the project of the global human rights movement, as I'll explain below.)

And so we can sum up the point of our discussion so far in one sentence: When we look at today's barbaric global order in light of human evolution, we see that we need to learn to tell a *human* story that is powerful enough to motivate the bulk of Homo sapiens to invest in protecting and nurturing human beings everywhere. In the next section, we'll explore how religion can help make that happen.

Religion

What is religion? Here are two pithy definitions offered by Robert Bellah (who was a professor of sociology at Harvard and Berkeley): Religion is "a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence."[3] And "religion is a system of symbols that, when enacted by human beings, establishes powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations that make sense in terms of an idea of a general order of existence."[4]

Notice that there is no mention of God or the supernatural in these definitions. Bellah explains: "It is not that….I think such beliefs are absent in religion, though in some cases they may be, just that they are not the defining aspect"[5]. "Religion" is here understood in broader terms than God and supernaturalism. In this sense, I think of religion as simply a part of human existence, like sexuality and the arts. It's the part where people use symbols to make sense of the world as a whole and to establish a fundamental attitude towards life (which generally involves spiritual practices).

The kind of religion I have in mind for this course starts with Bellah's definitions, but then gets more specific. In order to get at the kind of religion I mean, we need to add another important element; what Reverend Rudolph Otto called the "numinous"[6]. The Reverend Otto took the word "holy" and distinguished between some different meanings that it carries. One meaning he found was moral perfection. But he asked: what additional meaning is in the *holy* that is not just moral perfection? The name for the additional meaning that he found is "the numinous".

According to Otto, the numinous is one of the fundamental realms of human experience, like morality, music, mathematics and sexuality. While they all overlap, none of these realms can be reduced to the other. For example, you can't capture music in mathematics. To get at music, you have to listen to it. What realm of human experience is the numinous? I think it's closely related to what Rabbi Abraham Heschel calls awe and radical amazement. Otto talks about overwhelming mystery, sublime majesty and beauty, radical-otherness, fascination-enthrallment-attraction and terror. The numinous raises its head when you are smack up against the infinity of space, or the

3 "Religious Evolution", American Sociological Review 29, no. 3, pg. 359 (the article is free online).

4 Religion in Human Evolution, Harvard 2011, pg. xiv. Here Bellah is paraphrasing Clifford Geertz.

5 Ibid.

6 The Idea of the Holy, Oxford (first published 1923).

vastness of the desert or of the ocean, or the vulnerability of life. The numinous is in a way the ultimate liminal space: it deeply involves us because we are half in it, but it terrifies, fascinates and attracts us because it is half beyond us - bringing us towards that which transcends what we know and who we are. I believe that all human beings experience the numinous in one way or another.

Further, I think that the numinous realm of human experience is like an energy field. Like sexuality and music, it commands great power for human beings. I imagine that our encounter with the numinous goes back to pre-linguistic Homo sapiens, and maybe we share some version of it even with the great apes. In this sense, the numinous is woven into the very body of human existence. All parts of culture are touched with it. And it is particularly central to what I mean by "religion". If we add Otto's numinous to our above definitions, then religion becomes symbols and acts that relate humanity to the ultimate conditions of her existence with a particular emphasis on the numinous. The human experience of the numinous is "gathered up" - expressed, directed and emphasized - through rituals and stories that tune us in to it.

But religion isn't just about being titillated and terrified. Another important element of what I mean by religion is emphasized by Paul Tillich.[7] He talks about faith as one's "ultimate concern". Your ultimate concern is what you really hold as most important: the criteria according to which you judge ultimate value; that of yourself and that of the world. For almost all people, this includes what kind of parent, child, spouse, sibling and friend they are. And it always involves their over-arching picture of the world and how they understand their place in it. I think that's part of what Bellah means when he says that religion "relate[s] man to the ultimate conditions of his existence".

The way that religion is about the big picture, the meaning of life, the "ultimate conditions of existence", highlights that religion is not limited to rituals and prayers, but also involves all the other structures through which we navigate the meaning of our lives. Such structures are familial, educational, moral, legal, political, meditative, contemplative and more. Religion (in the sense that I mean) is the place where we tie all those things together into the big picture, and so religion touches on all the other kinds of meaning that are important to human beings.

If we combine "the numinous" with "our ultimate concern", we see that the educational, meditative, moral (etc.) structures involved in religion, which each have their own powerful motivating forces for human beings, are also charged with the energy of the numinous. It's not just love and justice but also transcendence, ecstasy, awe and radical amazement. That's one of the reasons why I think that religion is so powerful. You take our primal vital experience of life, and our basic emotions, and overlay them with powerful identity-creating stories, as well as with the insights gained in the spiritual, mystical and philosophical explorations of the generations, drench all of these in the electrified waters of the numinous, and then embody everything mentioned in powerful rhythms, words and rituals that touch on all the levels of feeling and thinking in some group of Homo sapiens; Do all that and you get one extremely powerful thing called "religion".

[7] I'm drawing from his Dynamics of Faith.

Given all that, I think its clear that if we can enlist religion in growing a more powerful human identity-story, we have enlisted a powerful friend. While religion is sometimes the enemy of human dignity, it can also be a powerful force for its protection. When John Woolman, an American Quaker born in 1720 who has been called "The Apostle of Abolition"[8], began preaching that faithfulness to God requires abolishing slavery, he ignited a religious passion that helped facilitate the global paradigm shift that outlawed human bondage across the planet. That religious passion united humanity's moral intuition with her awe in the face of God's creation; it wove the mysterious and enthralling presence of the divine into the love that humans can know for the other.

John Woolman tapped into the power of religion to arouse the spirit of humanity to abolish slavery. But when you read about his life, you see that in fact, the river of energy flowed both ways. Woolman didn't only draw on religion for morality; his campaign to abolish slavery deeply empowered his religion. Fighting the evils he saw around him, with love and respect not only for the victim but also for the perpetrators (including his own sometimes slave-owning Quaker co-religionists), was not only a moral obligation but a daily personal spiritual praxis through which Woolman sought spiritual transcendence and intimacy with God. He traveled from community to community, across the American frontier and all the way to England, to commune with God and Friends, and to gather the forces of humanity to protect human dignity.

Woolman's style of discourse, a rational appeal to common values in a context of love and respect, was not incidental to his project but at its heart. Like prayer, the struggle for justice as a personal religious praxis is not just a means to an end but an end in itself. Woolman preached to his community in a form that embodied the consciousness of God to which he called them. When offered in service to God, the struggle for justice and prayer are symbiotic: they raise each other's energies, lifting us higher and closer to God.

Quaker John Woolman exemplifies what religion can do in the struggle for human dignity. And there are surely other versions of his example in the religions of the world. I think that humanity is waking up to the idea of human rights, and that in due time the great religions of the world will offer inspiring holy stories that will push humanity towards greater justice.

Another example is Rav Kook, to whom we will come later (Class 8). His is a powerful mystical-religious particularism that involves, as an integral part of itself, an overriding interest in protecting and nurturing all of humanity. I think his words below capture something of the spirit of the "Apostle of Abolition", together with Rav Kook's unique weave of themes from the Bible, the Kabbalah and the Enlightenment:

בראשית מטעו של העם הזה...נתגלתה השאיפה להקים צבור אנושי גדול אשר "ישמור את דרך ד' לעשות צדקה ומשפט". זוהי השאיפה, שבאה מכח ההכרה הברורה והעזה והתביעה המוסרית הכוללת והרמה, להוציא את האנושיות מתחת סבל נורא של צרות רוחניות וחמריות ולהביאנה לחיי

[8] Thomas Slaughter, The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition. For selections from Woolman's writings, see the source-texts for this class.

חופש מלאי הוד ועדן, באור האידיאה האלהית, ולהצליח בזה את כל האדם כלו . ר' אברהם קוק, אורות, עמ' 104.

In the essence of the foundational root of this people [the People Israel]…is revealed the aspiration to create a great human collective that "shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Genesis 18:19). This is the aspiration – built upon a clear and mighty consciousness and the highest and most inclusive moral imperative – to redeem humanity from the horrific burdens of spiritual and material sorrow, and to achieve for her a life of freedom filled with dignified glory and refined pleasure, in the light of the Divine Ideal, in order to achieve success for the human project in its totality. *Rabbi Abraham Kook,* ***Orot****, pg. 104.*

In the discussion so far, I've focused more on what human rights is meant to save us from (poverty and oppression) and less on what humanity does when she is allowed to rise up from those "horrific burdens of spiritual and material sorrow". Rav Kook seeks"…to achieve for her [humanity] a life of freedom filled with dignified glory and refined pleasure, in the light of the Divine Ideal, in order to achieve success for the human project in its totality." I think that Rav Kook was an inspired religious visionary and that his teaching can be a powerful force for a higher humanity. As we move through this course, and learn some of Rav Kook's sources, I hope that we'll discover new levels of meaning in his words.

To sum up this section, I suggested above that in order to move humanity towards a more human (and a less barbaric) world order, we need to grow the human element of our identity stronger. Religion, as the part of our lives where we make sense of the big picture, try to orient our lives in light of it, and reach up towards transcendence, is deeply entwined with the stories we tell about who we are. The energy and drama of the numinous, which holds a special place in the landscape of religious experience, are part of what makes those stories so powerful for us. The bottom line is that religion can help empower the human layer of our identity, and that more powerful human identity can, in turn, facilitate a greater revelation of religious truth.

Moving towards the next section, I think that "human rights" is the best project around today for giving concrete meaning to the "human story"; The kind of meaning that can lessen the brutality of the world order. And so what I'm suggesting is that "human rights" take the place that abolition had for John Woolman. Or, in Rav Kook's terms, guaranteeing all people human rights is the practical foundation upon which to cultivate for humanity "a life of freedom filled with dignified glory and refined pleasure, in the light of the Divine Ideal". In the Rambam's terms, which talk about mending the body and soul of humanity in order to cultivate the Image of God, human rights are "mending the body". That's the overall direction in which I'm going. Now, its time to say what I mean by "human rights".

Human Rights

What are human rights? What is the global human rights movement?

People mean a lot of different things when they say "human rights". For the purposes of this course, I'm interpreting "human rights" and the "human rights movement" in a particular way. In some ways, my idea of human rights is tailor made for the Jewish sources that we'll study. That suggests that it's a bit idiosyncratic. At the same time, my impression is that the way I think about human rights is not uncommon (minus all the stuff about evolution and religion) in the world of human rights academics, researchers, lawyers, activists and so forth. I think that the basic approach to human rights that I'll outline below is pretty main-stream[9].

Human rights are an answer to a question: what can we do to move humanity from our present barbaric global order, in which the lives of billions are partially or completely destroyed, towards a global order reflecting *human* civilization? At present, the global order is built around independent states. According to the Economist Democracy Index, about half of the world's population live in "democracies" and "flawed democracies" (India and Israel are examples of "flawed democracies"). Another 14 percent live in "hybrid regimes" (such as Turkey), and the last almost 40 percent live in "authoritarian regimes" (such as China, Russia and Syria). In a way, the global reality looks like a giant failed state; with pockets of relative success and total disaster.

But even as disastrous as the present state-system is, it's hard to imagine a One State Solution. We as a species don't seem ready to share so much of our self-government together. But if so, what can we do? We can:

1) Seek species-wide agreement on basic legal norms to protect human beings everywhere.

2) Create non-violent pressure on states and other actors to conform to these norms.

In a nutshell, that's what I think "human rights" are about.

9 A lot of how I'm thinking about "human rights" is captured in two relatively short articles:

1) Jack Donnelly, "The Relative Universality of Human Rights", Human Rights Quarterly, Volume 29, Number 2, May 2007, pp.281-306;

2) Marie-Bénédicte Dembour, "What Are Human Rights? Four Schools of Thought**"'** Human Rights Quarterly, Volume 32, Number 1, February 2010, pp. 1-20. *Note: I like the way she distinguishes between the four schools of thought, but I essentially agree with all four schools that she describes (with perhaps an emphasis on what she calls the "protest school" of human rights). It looks to me like each school clarifies important truths as to the meaning of "human rights" at this time in history.*

For a fascinating history of human rights that seeks to debunk the "church history" that has grown up around the term, see Samuel Moyn's The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History. *Perhaps unlike Moyn, I think there is an important place for a sacred story of human rights, but I agree with him that it is vitally important to distinguish between our sacred or mythical stories about human rights, and a critical history. The story he tells, in which human rights don't really become important globally until the late 1970's and then in a somewhat accidental way, is very different from the standard histories of human rights that you find in textbooks. These sometimes sound as if human rights are the natural and sublime fruition of human civilization, perfected by enlightened reason, and as intended by God. I think that the truth is somewhere in between Moyn and the 'church historians'. That's because, again perhaps unlike Moyn, I believe that the success of the human rights project is likely to be a critical piece of our transition as a species to a truly human civilization. Just a lowly stage of that civilization, for sure, but one a lot less barbaric than the present one. If that's true, then the high-falutin rhetoric of the church historians of human rights may not be so far off.*

See also **Materials on Human Rights Theory and Praxis** (http://tinyurl.com/lpoa5bz)

Now, seeking species-wide agreement may sound wildly unrealistic. The fact is, however, that the global human rights movement has been wildly successful in achieving an impressive degree of species-wide agreement about human rights law. The vast majority of human beings live in states that have legally committed themselves to all or part of human rights law (roughly 160 out of 190 of the world's states). And people of all languages, cultures and nationalities use human rights language in their struggles for human dignity. It would be an exaggeration to say that global agreement has been achieved, but the pace at which human rights discourse has spread across the world's population in the 66 years since the Universal Declaration, in the wake of the Holocaust, is astounding. Nobody could have predicted so much success so fast.

I think that one of the most important reasons that human rights discourse has become so widely accepted is that it has evolved and changed in response to challenges from different segments of humanity. According to one common interpretation, human rights has gone through three generations of development: the first generation were the civil and political rights associated with the liberal West; the second generation were the economic, social and cultural rights associated with the Socialist bloc; and the third generation involve the rights of self-determination and development associated with the third world revolt against European Colonialism in the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century. And human rights theory and practice have been changed from other angles also. Feminist critiques resulted in important changes in human rights laws in the seventies and eighties. Today there are interesting innovations in human rights law in relation to people with disabilities.

Understood this way, human rights law and discourse is the first (and remarkably successful) attempt of the human species to agree on basic legal norms to protect and nurture human beings everywhere. I think it's fair to say in an overarching way that human rights law, as expressed in the Universal Declaration and the two covenants, seeks to guarantee for all people the kinds of civil rights and freedoms we associate with liberal democracies, while at the same time legally requiring governments to make a reasonable effort at the services we associate with the agenda of social democrats. I don't mean of course that human rights can provide these things alone. That would be like saying that the legal system of a country could make it successful without an economy, a political system, a police-force and a million other things. My point is just that in an overarching way human rights law seems to cover the bases.

Here's one creative attempt to capture all of human rights law in one diagram:



Diagram by Dr Sami Mahkonen http://www.aibd.org.my/node/632

I can't prove it, but I believe that if we could somehow poll the entire human population of the planet, so that we could present to them the most basic human rights norms (like protection from arbitrary arrest and torture, freedom of expression and religion, transparent government, and the direction of public resources to medical care, education and other basic human needs), and then ask them: would you like to see these norms binding on all governments (or war-lords, as the case may be)? I believe there would be a vast and absolute majority of Homo sapiens for human rights.

Of course, there would be large populations that would resist the full application of human rights to women, other-than-heterosexuals, non-adherents, and so forth. There would be other important disagreements about what human rights should mean. And since all peoples have the right to self-determination, and human rights are interpreted locally by each state, how to navigate conflicting ideas of human rights is a complex thing.

However, I think that the degree of disagreement between human beings alive today is wildly exaggerated. Many (if not all?) of the proponents for major human rights violations in the name of cultural differences, like the regimes governing China and Saudi Arabia, kill their own people if they speak out against them. There is no way to know what Chinese society would come to demand of its government if people were allowed to speak their minds. Maybe "Asian values" requires a significantly different idea of citizen's rights and maybe they don't. But all we know presently is that a violent, corrupt and oppressive tyranny chooses to make use of that claim.

The same goes for Saudi Arabia. There is no reason to assume that after a few decades of free public discourse, public opinion there would side with the reactionary violation of the basic rights of women. The fact that a bizarre fundamentalist oil aristocracy says that they represent somebody's values gives us very little reason to think that they do. I'd like to suggest the following rule for analysis of cultural differences in regard to human rights: *nobody who kills their own people when they speak out against them gets to represent the culture of that people*. If you have to kill those

who oppose you in order to hold on to power, it looks like you may not represent the consensus-view after all! We can only know what each culture's input into global human rights discourse will be after the members of those cultures who are presently silenced through violence are allowed to speak. They are integral parts of their cultures no less than those that victimize them. If we take tyrannies and war-lords as representatives, we confuse the beautiful cultures of humanity with the vulgarities of organized crime. When you hear a claim that human rights must be violated in the name of self-determination, look carefully at whose interests are being served.

I don't mean to suggest that there are no real conflicts and differences. There are many. But there is a lot more in common, and a lot more actual agreement, than contemporary discourse would have you believe. Exaggerating the differences - pretending that there is a great war of civilizations or an unbridgeable value chasm - is a tactic used to justify selfishness and aggression under the guise of a "real politic" that reflects "the way it is". But human evolution shows that "the way it is" is constantly changing; contingent and unfolding.

Given the degree of international mutual-understanding and cooperation around human rights that has already been achieved, there is every reason to believe that in due time Homo sapiens can find common ground. Getting to that common ground is an ongoing process. Such norms will continue to evolve as long as the human race does. People will argue about them forever. Those arguments don't undermine human rights practice, they *are* human rights practice. We're *supposed* to argue about it. That discourse, grounded in mutual respect and non-violence, creates the species-wide inter-subjective space that humanity so desperately needs[10].

Human Rights Practice[11]

But what do human rights actually mean in practice? One of the most important meanings of human rights in my eyes flows directly from the last point touched on above: the creation of an inter-subjective space, shared by all humans, where a discourse built on mutual-respect and non-violence goes on about what human rights are and how they should be enforced. To a large extent, that discourse is already happening. People of different cultures, with radically different circumstances and goals, are finding in human rights a language through which to express both their common ground and their disagreements. In newspapers, journals, and newsletters, in churches and community centers, in courts of law and in halls of government, people everywhere are using human rights language to understand each other. They are using human rights language to translate their needs and goals into a form that people globally can understand.

Human rights discourse is not disembodied but involves any number of systems in which significant power and resources are directly moved by human rights talk. I'll now present a few of these systems roughly in the order of how I see their importance:

[10] My thinking about this space is in the spirit of Jurgen Habermas, as in Communication and the Evolution of Society.

[11] An important source of how I see the world of human rights is Helen Stacey's Human Rights for the 21st Century.

1) Civil-society organizations like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and their thousands of national and local sister organizations. It might seem strange to start with civil-society, but if Samuel Moyn is right in his The Last Utopia, it is really the mass membership (and mass-media-influencing) civil-society organizations like Amnesty International that catapulted human rights in the late 1970's to the central place they hold in global discourse today. As long as "human rights" were happening mostly at the U.N., he says, they were of no real significance. (I think Moyn's story helps put the importance of the U.N.'s problematic human rights institutions in perspective.)

NGO's like Human Rights Watch (and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel) not only expose human rights realities, drive public opinion and create political pressure, they also help grow the global civil society which is the only true guarantor of dignity and rights for all. They are not only the means, they are the end. When I talk about personal religious service through human rights activism, I mostly mean in the framework of these kinds of organizations.

2) The overlapping legal-systems of the liberal-democracies. These legal systems, like those of the United States and Germany, wield vast power and resources. While they are deeply flawed in many ways, and generally give rights to citizens rather than humans, they are still relatively successful systems for providing many human rights for as far as they go. These over-lapping systems are powerhouses for human rights but must be improved internally and in their global impact. That work is done in a million different ways. One important way is through civil-society human rights activism as above.

3) States that directly incorporate human rights law into their national legal systems like South Africa and India. There are many such states with varying degrees of incorporation. These legal systems, which are of course also plagued with many problems, empower human rights discourse because it has binding legal status in their courts of law. And people across borders read and influence each other, as in the Supreme Courts of South Africa and India. What "human rights" are understood to mean in these contexts joins together with global civil-society discourse, and that of the liberal-democracies, so that the global inter-subjective space of human rights is empowered and enlarged.

4) Regional courts and conventions, like that of Europe, Africa and the Americas. The European court has jurisdiction over some 800 million people. While I'm sure that evaluating its overall effectiveness is a complex matter, there is no question it has serious impact. The other regional arrangements are less powerful but surely also make a difference in their member countries.

5) International bodies like the International Criminal Court and temporary tribunals. I'm not sure how effective these are as legal bodies but they certainly play a role in empowering human rights discourse throughout the world. I've read many times over the last few years in the Israeli press about how various actors in the executive branch have thought twice about doing something they wanted to do out of a concern about what their legal defense would look like in The Hague.

6) Various U.N. bodies. Maybe it's too cynical to place these so far down the list. U.N. activities around human rights are critical. The office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights shows promise. And, after all, the Universal Declaration and other key documents all happened in the context of the U.N.

At the same time, as the center of the global failed state, the U.N. obviously manifests the hypocrisy and corruption that accompanies law and politics in our (still barbaric) world order. Since some of the human rights forums at the U.N. have been places of explicit racism against Israeli Jews, it's hard for many Jews to take the U.N. seriously. But, then again, there is hypocrisy and corruption elsewhere also. Maybe I should move the U.N. higher up on the list.

In light of examples 1-6, I think that we can conclude that, for all their enumerable failings, human rights are not only the most successful attempt in the history of our species to agree on basic norms to protect humanity, they also already wield vast cultural and material resources. That's not so bad for only 66 years since the Universal Declaration.

Objections to Human Rights

I think that an adequate understanding of the human rights project dispels most of the central arguments against them. I'll address of few of the most common arguments against human rights now:

1. Human Rights law is a part of Western culture and is irrelevant to non-Western cultures.

There is no question that human rights discourse is deeply imprinted by European culture. But so what? So are modern science and medicine. Not everything that comes from Europe is bad. Most of the peoples of the world seem to want both modern medicine and human rights, regardless of the fact that these things are indebted to Europeans.

Additionally, the very essence of human rights is the commitment to universal human equality and dignity regardless of race, class and so forth. It is extremely misleading to say that these are the traditional values of Europe; the continent that brought you the inquisition, colonialism, the slave trade, the ghetto and the holocaust. The idea that Africans, Jews and poor people, for example, have inalienable rights equal to European nobles is simply *not* a traditional European idea. Human Rights were and are a revolution, both for Europe, and for everybody else. And at the same time, the idea of human dignity has deep roots in all the cultures of the world. The world's peoples have a share both in human rights and in the evils that they come to address.

In short, I think it's clear that the fact that human rights discourse reflects European culture does not detract one iota from its importance.

2. Human Rights are a form of cultural Imperialism.

First of all, I think that this claim misunderstands the relation between human rights and European culture, as above. Second, human rights work by agreement. And most states have signed on. One of the reasons that they agree is that human rights law does not replace national legal systems but

seeks to guide them. Each system, like that of the U.S. or Israel, is expected to interpret and apply human rights differently. The self-determination of peoples is a central tenet of human rights law and doctrine. Thirdly, human rights law is decentralized and regional. For instance, there are European, African and American systems. The African Charter emphasizes collective rights far more than the European one does. The global rule of law as envisioned by human rights is decentralized, sensitive to cultural differences, and based on respectful non-violent agreement. While any movement seeking international legal norms must be mindful of the dangers of imperialism, I think that the claim that human rights constitute imperialism is divorced from reality.

3. The Idea of Rights is mistaken. We should talk about values or responsibilities.

According to Jack Donnelly[12], the language of rights emerged in Europe in response to the rise of two major forces: 1) the modern bureaucratic state and 2) the capitalist market. Legal rights, rather than "responsibilities" or "values", were found effective in taming (to some degree) the power of the state and the corporation. The language of rights is not meant to replace all other kinds of discourse any more than commitment to the rule of law means that we should run our homes like court rooms. It's an effective language for protecting people in the legal, economic and political playing field opened up by capitalism and the modern state. Due to Globalization, that's pretty much everybody.

4. Human Rights are a middle class concern. Most people lack basic needs and human rights don't matter to them.

This argument is somewhat true in regard to the bias towards civil and political rights found in some places, but misses what is often called the second generation of human rights codified in the Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social rights. Human rights are not only about freedom of speech, they are also about health care, clean water and housing. Economic human rights are generally viewed in terms of reasonable attempts given available resources, rather than absolute standards, but that doesn't mean that they are secondary in importance. The Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social rights pushes, I think, generally in the direction of social democracy.

5. Human Rights are not enforced. They are just talk.

This statement is largely true, but also misleading. Human rights are not enforced. Millions starve or are murdered. But at the same time, my guess is that more often than not, the struggles for human dignity that are taking place around the world today (particularly between people who don't share the same national/religious identity story) take place in human rights terms. Human rights have become the lingua franca of legal and political legitimacy. If you explain your plight in human rights terms, people across the planet will know what you mean. While often the struggles for human dignity fail, sometimes they also succeed. Human Rights are involved in both the failures and successes. And sometimes these take place in contexts where human rights discourse itself

12 See reference to his article above.

wields real power (as described above). Human rights are not powerful enough to protect vast human populations, but they have far too much impact to be dismissed as "just talk".

Conclusion

In light of the theory and practice of human rights as outlined above, I think that commitment to human rights is the minimum content that we need for our shared human identity story. The most basic expression of being human is commitment to *coming together to agree on norms* and *coming together to make them reality*. We don't have to agree about what all the norms are, but we need to be committed to working it out non-violently. Just like so long ago, when we share a story that contains common norms, even people we will never meet are transformed from lethal competitors to fellow story tellers.

And so as I see things, the job of religion is to internalize human rights theory and practice into its own unique forms. The loving and respectful attitude towards all human beings exemplified by Rabbi Abraham Kook and Preacher John Woolman must be grounded in the tradition of human rights discourse as it has evolved so far. Religion must preach that faithfulness to the human rights project is bedrock to the basic moral and spiritual attitude to which it aspires. The Torah of Human Rights is a particular Jewish contribution in that direction. That's the bottom line of today's presentation.

Part Two: God, Torah and Human Rights

Introduction

In today's class, we begin to move away from the more universal (or at least more Western) discourse of the previous class, towards the more particularly Jewish materials of the subsequent classes. But we are still in between. In today's class, I want to lay out what I mean by God and Torah, and how they relate to human rights. This discussion forms the second half of the conceptual framework. We'll begin with God!

God

The meaning of the word God involves everything that human beings think and feel. It involves not only our rational linear thought, but also the stories that carry our identity, the emotions that shape our inner life (and which we evidently largely share with other mammals), our experience of living in a body - metabolism, creaturely-ness, and many other things. Since the word "God" means lots of non-linear non-rational things, the linear rational discourse characteristic of theology can't capture it. But that doesn't mean there's no point in reflecting on "God" in a linear rational way. And it doesn't mean that what we say in linear rational terms about God can't be clear. It is only a partial truth, that's for sure. But a partial truth doesn't have to be murky and confusing. I think that in the world of liberal Judaism today, there is a lot of unnecessary confusion about the meaning of the word "God" and that this confusion gets in the way of religious life. In this spirit, I'll try to lay out what I mean by "God" as simply as I can.

In my experience of the world, there are elements that I think are worthy of service and worship. These elements are involved with things like love, justice, beauty, awe, transcendence, the idea/experience of the One, and many other things. "God" is the name for all those elements. Rav Kook also uses the term "elohut" or divinity. In my vocabulary, things that move me to an attitude of service and worship are divine, and when I imagine divinity in one unity, in one symbolic constellation, I call it "God". God is not a name but a whole sentence: "That which I recognize as worthy of service and worship". When I say the words of the prayers, expressing my obligation and will to serve and worship God, I understand those words as referring to things that (I believe) really are worthy of service and worship. The words are simply true. The bottom line is that since I directly experience God, I believe in God. In this sense, what I mean by God is simple.

Now, in order to really give you a sense of the way that I'm talking about God, I'd have to go into a lengthier discussion.[13] What I said above assumes ideas about how to read prayers, various religious conceptions of God and other things that would need to be unpacked. But I think that the most important truth can be clear without too much discussion: I believe that the reason that you are reading this document - the reason that you are interested in religion and human rights - is because

[13] I tried to do it as briefly and clearly as possible here: "A Brief Torah Theology - Part One: From Here to God". http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/from-here-to-god/

you experience things that you think are worthy of service and worship (or at least you experience the same sort of thing that I experience and then try to capture in those words). And therefore, if you defined your words like I do, you would know for sure that "God is real". I think that's the natural thing for a person practicing religion to do. Often, at least in the liberal world, we don't do that but rather become unnecessarily confused. Below, I'll try to say why I think that happens.

But remember that I argued that what "God" means for us involves many non-linear and non-rational aspects of human beings (like the way we love and the way we feel compelled by justice). Linear rational statements, like the one I made above about why God is real, are a tiny part of religious life. My point is that this tiny part can be simple and straight forward, and not murky and confusing. But the real work of religious life, drawing close to God, cannot be captured by any theological formulation.

We simply know God

Let me now tell a simplistic (possibly simple-minded) euro-centric story to explain why I think that we are unnecessarily confused about God. The story unfolds through The Middle Ages (childhood), Modernity (adolescence), Post-Modernity (young adulthood) and Post-Post-Modernity (mature adulthood)[14].

A long time ago, when we were children in the Middle Ages, we thought we knew about God. In fact, we got it partially right (awe, spiritual transcendence, love, charity, justice etc.) and partially wrong (racism, fundamentalism, homophobia, religious persecution etc.). In the modern age, when we became adolescents, we thought we uncovered the failures of the previous generations and went about trying to fix them. For instance, we started out on the path towards human rights. We also went through a lot of other developments that transformed us and the structure of our consciousness, like an individual passing from childhood (the Middle Ages) through adolescence (modernity) and into early adulthood (post-modernity).

Since God and religion remained largely defined by their meanings in the Middle Ages, in modernity we rejected them. There were better things to have faith in than God, like rationality, progress and scientific objectivity. Then we got older, and it wasn't any easier for us than it was for Harry Potter. There were world wars and disillusionment with earlier ideals. And we learned new things that undermined our sense that we knew what was going on. Physics, it turned out, doesn't make any sense. And in cultural studies we discovered that the very truths that redeemed us from the folly of our childhood in the Middle Ages, like rationality and progress, were not vast objective

14 The parallels between history and the individual development of a person are just figurative - I don't mean them dogmatically. More on that later. Also, so as not to unnecessarily embarrass myself, I'll only try to date the last two stages of the story: I'm thinking of post-modernity as arising through the 20th century and continuing into our day. I'm thinking of post-post-modernity as budding towards the end of the 20th century and continuing to grow since. In my thinking, following Ken Wilber and Jean Gebser, the previous stages of human development are also structures of consciousness that are always present. New ones develop but the old ones don't disappear, they are enveloped in the new ones like atoms are enveloped in molecules (like our vital life experience is enveloped in stories).

bedrock upon which to build our lives but rather teetering constructions, constructed largely from ourselves.

Instead of the objective foundational truths of modernity, post-modernity left us with truths that are always bound by contexts, and those contexts dizzyingly unfold into other contexts, without end, so that truth is always partial and sliding. Interestingly, this aspect of post-modernity strikes me as very similar to the thinking of the Zohar (a 13th century Kabbalistic text). The Zohar, however, is happy about the intriguing paradoxical and holographic nature of reality. Post modernity, on the other hand, seems generally depressed about it. I expect that's because at the time of the Zohar we still knew that we have direct access to uplifting transcendent ultimate value, whereas in post-modernity we often sank into an atmosphere of depressing and superficial nihilism. Its like we thought: if truth is contingent and sliding around, why should we believe in anything?!

Luckily, however, we are now moving on to the more mature adulthood of post post-modernity. But before I talk about that, here is the place to say that I lined up the stages of history and the development of an individual just for the purposes of my story; I don't mean to suggest that this line-up is fixed. We could just as well say that all of human development to this day is the early childhood of humanity, and that in some future adolescence we will blossom into something that we can barely imagine. In fact, I both hope and believe that to be the case. I see that blossoming as the purpose of religion.

Now back to our story: As we move into the more mature adulthood of post post-modernity, the playing field on what God means is now really wide open. We don't feel compelled by the logic of the Middle Ages, with its clerical authority and reliable tradition (and its chauvinism and persecution). Nor are we taken-in by the almost equally orthodox faith of modernity, that rejects God as irrational but is unable to see the partial and self-serving nature of its own "rationality" and "progress" (with their colonial shadows). And we are no longer in the throes of post-modernity, in which we fought to hold ourselves together even as all the truths that we knew - from physics to morals to philosophy - became unhinged. We've internalized all that now. We're OK (sometimes!) with truths that are contingent, partial and continually sliding away…

The answer to the question raised above ("If truth is contingent and sliding why should we believe in anything!?") could not be more simple: we believe because we are surrounded everywhere by things like love, justice and spiritual transcendence that are self-evidently valuable. For people sensitive to the qualities of the numinous, as defined in the previous class under "religion", that self-evident value involves an experience of holiness that moves them not only to faithful service but also to seek higher states of consciousness through worship and other spiritual practices. It is only natural for such people to understand all symbols of God and elohut (divinity) as signifying that which they already know is worthy of service and worship. That is, after all, the logic and reason of their religious commitment from its very beginning.

But if everything is so simple, why do we remain confused? I think we are confused because we get caught up in the thinking of one of our own previous stages. Sometimes we feel compelled and/or

horrified by the patriarchal childhood conception of God in the Middle Ages. At other times we are taken-in by modernity, and feel as if belief in God is irrational. Then we might take the next step into post-modernity, and even belief in love and morality, since they cannot be clearly defined, seem irrational in our eyes. And then not only is there no God, there is no value, just the empty expanse of nihilism.

Luckily, however, this kind of nihilism is just a stance that we take when thinking about philosophy, it's not how we really live our lives. It confuses us, limits our religious imaginations, draws us away from what is powerful in religious tradition, and is generally depressing. It saps liberal religion of energy, leaving the arena to be dominated by more powerful racist and fundamentalist versions. Our confusion cannot, however, fully extinguish our religious life, because that goes on beneath and beyond our conceptual constructions; we still seek God in the love, justice, beauty and transcendence manifest in our lives because that is what we are about.

I believe that with some clear thinking, we can lift the fog which sometimes makes rational linear attempts at theology so confusing. The simple truth is that since we experience God, we know that God is real. On that foundation each person can build their own much more robust theological account (as well as theories of what is "knowledge" and "reality"), if they are so inclined. Such a theology will become as complex as the fields of human knowledge that are integrated into it; and as idiosyncratic as each person leading their own exploration. But that complexity and particularity need not blur the reality of the God that we know from experience: what we mean by "God", even as every linear statement is inadequate, is something that we see and feel all around.

Torah

In the same spirit, I commit to living my life in light of Torah because I see God in this tradition. If God was not obviously revealed to my eyes in the sacred texts, rhythms and structures of Jewish religious life, I would not commit to them. God is the judge; tradition merely a vessel. But Torah tradition is the vessel of God's indwelling - the mishkan - the presence of God revealed in Israel. In the life-form and world-view that open up in my life of Torah and Mitsvot in Eretz Yisrael, I unmistakably see a face of the true God - the Most High - the sum total of everything to which I know I must be faithful and the higher end that calls for transcendence. I think of it as one particular face of God; the face of God revealed to and through Israel X 3: People, Torah and Land. Rabbi Yehudah Halevi suggests names for this face of God such as The Divine Principle and The Shechinah (which has the same root as mishkan or indwelling).

Let me say that again: I commit to Torah because I see God in it. It's not that I take it on authority that God is there, or that some logical syllogism proves it true. And it is certainly not the (curious and I think incoherent) notion that there once occurred an historical event that compels me to believe that Torah is where to find God.[15] I believe that God is manifest in and through Torah life

[15] I think the idea of historical revelation is incoherent because either we experience God, so we know that revelation is real, or we don't. If we don't, there is no reason that I can see to believe that revelation happened before. The people

because I see God there. This is the foundation of my religious commitment and informs every aspect of what I think Torah means.

What do I mean by "Torah life"? What defines something as part of Judaism as opposed to part of some other religion? I don't have linear answers for these questions. I also don't think that linear answers are needed. In the living of it, I see a logic to the way Torah unfolds and how it is interpreted. And I share some version of that logic with various overlapping communities in which I am embedded. That's as much coherency as I need to make sense of my religious commitment.

In an overarching way, I see Torah as a life-form and world-view, that seeks to make the unique face of God revealed to and through Israel more fully manifest in the world. Torah is in that sense a spiritual discipline that is so broad as to include a people, a state and a land, in addition to various rituals and spiritual practices, as integral parts of its path towards God. In a more narrow sense, Torah is an inter-textual reality through which religious Jews navigate Aggadah (the meaning of existence) and Halacha (what we must do) through a certain kind of text-based spiritual practice. That practice includes a discipline of interpretation called Midrash; as well as meditating on the forms, sounds and meanings of texts through chanting, prayer and in other settings. Another important part of Torah is that it is entwined around a holy story (involving the tradition, the people and the land). Another element is its traditions of Kabbalah and philosophy. Yet another are the rhythms and structures of the Jewish year. In this course, we'll explore living eco-systems of Torah tradition in the form of prophecy, Talmud, medieval Talmudic interpretation, philosophy, Kabbalah, Halacha and Zionist ideology.

It is the whole thing, taken together, that manifests the God of Israel (or Shechinah or Divine Principle) that I see in the tradition. Torah life is a living breathing thing, made of me and other Jews, and connected to all people. Torah organically unfolds through the generations in the logic of its various disciplines such as Midrash, Halacha and Aggadah. The Torah organism is the vessel - the Mishkan - through which the face of God that I worship becomes manifest. It is a discipline that includes a whole life, from family to work to community to (at least for me) living in Eretz Yisrael as a citizen of the State of Israel. In that sense, even as I see faces of God in other religious traditions, I understand Torah to be an absolute commitment. It is an art that you do with your whole body and life.

But crucial to this project is remembering that the commitment to Torah is an out-growth of the commitment to God, and forever remains subservient to it. To hold some version of "Jewishness" as

who sang the story of Sinai around the camp fire, and those that later wrote it down, did not think of Sinai as an historical event. In fact, they had no concept of history. They didn't distinguish between "what really happened" and the truth of the stories that contained their identity and values. In a way, Sinai means for me the same thing that it meant for them: that God reveals the Torah to Israel. I know that's true because I see it every day. The story symbolizes a religious truth that I live. I would guess that the idea that Sinai was an "historical event" emerged in the early modern era, when people both learned to distinguish between sacred myth and critical history and also began to loose the sensitivity and vocabulary necessary to "encounter God". They replaced something that wasn't making sense (revelation) with something that did make sense (historical events). But ultimately, they tried to prop up a symbol whose meaning they were loosing with a new-fangled claim that is nothing but a non-sequitur: you can only know that there is something worthy of service and worship if you see it. It doesn't matter what did or didn't happen before.

the absolute value instead of God - to worship the Torah, the People or the Land - is the ever-present idolatry lurking in Jewish tradition. It means worshipping ourselves, and is a structural and potentially fatal flaw of Judaism (and perhaps all religions). And this kind of idolatry is not a theoretical danger but has historically - and still does today- lead to unnecessary suffering and victimization. In this sense, Torah comes with its own enemy to fight: Israel comes built-in with Amalek. (In fact, imaging that Amalek *is someone other than ourselves* is a symptom that we're already sliding down the slippery slope to collective self-adoration, and have not fully integrated into ourselves the human ring of identity.)

How can we make sure that we don't fall into religious idolatry? We won't fall into idolatry if we read the Torah as *coming from God*. When we interpret the Torah, we start with the recognition *that we know a lot about God*. That's why we're committed to a God-centered tradition like Judaism. Since our interpretation begins with the God that we know, we are always responsible to explain how the meanings that we ascribe to the Torah are in keeping with the things that we know about God, like how God is revealed in love, justice, beauty, truth and spiritual transcendence. *You are always morally responsible for the interpretation of sacred text that you profess*. This won't guarantee that we are always right: our highest conceptions are often gravely limited as I'm sure would be obvious to both future and past generations. But as long as we follow this path, we can honestly say that what we think God's Torah means is the most sublime (including that it is the truest and most moral) divine message that we can imagine. If we cannot say this, we thereby admit that our allegiance is given to something less than God the Most High, and reveal that we have fallen into idolatry.

A common example of *not* reading the Torah as coming from God is taking the historical meaning of a text as religiously binding. If you keep God in view, it could not be clearer that the historical meaning of a Biblical text is rarely the same as the Torah's binding religious meaning. The religious meaning of a sacred text is only revealed when you assume that the text is revealed to you by God. Since "God" partially consists of the highest truth and morality you can imagine, the meaning of the text that is binding on you can only be in harmony with that highest truth and morality. The historical meaning of the text, however, is limited by the culture and consciousness of its historical authors. Since they are human, and not God, they cannot be expected to capture all truth that had yet to be discovered.

In the case of the Five Books of Moses, for instance, it's clear that the historical authors shared many of the limitations of their period, such as the acceptance of slavery and genocide. That doesn't make them evil but just reflects the path of human cultural evolution. It is clear, however, that today's global prohibition of slavery and genocide is simply better - higher and closer to God - than the ancient world's acceptance of these things. This highlights the limitations of historical meanings.

The religiously binding meaning of Jewish sacred text only emerges through the discipline of Midrash[16]. Midrash is part of the Torah tradition's text-based spiritual practice described above. In midrash, the learner seriously engages the texts and seeks their meanings. But the text is read as already assuming the highest and most important truths that the learner knows. And so, when Talmudic sages read the Bible (as in the case of Kiryat Sh'ma, see sources above on pg. 9), they read it in light of their own Rabbinic Judaism which is quite foreign to the historical meaning of the Bible. In the same way, the Rambam's reading of the Bible and the Talmud transformed their meaning in light of the medieval philosophical principles that he thought were true. Jewish religious interpretation has never been about reconstructing historical meanings. In each generation, the learners of Torah have read the tradition of sacred texts that they inherited in light of the values they thought worthy of God. Needless to say, those values have changed a lot over the generations.

Another way to characterize the nature of religiously binding truth, as opposed to historical truth, is that *the true meaning of sacred text is that meaning which draws us closer to God.* We are not bound by the historical meaning for the simple reason that *we worship God and not history*. Religious meaning is meaning consecrated to God. Since human civilization and consciousness change and evolve, that which draws us closer to God is forever in flux. When our conceptions of loving-kindness and justice evolve, for instance, so do the *true religious meanings* of our tradition. The notion that the *historical* meaning of a text is religiously authoritative is antithetical to the logic of religious truth as I understand it. Commitment to religion *means* commitment to *reinterpreting* our received tradition - to *drashing* it - in light of *our ever-unfolding consciousness of God*.

That doesn't mean that the tradition randomly leaps from place to place. There is a logic in the process, exemplified by Midrash, Halacha and Aggadah. Some parts of the tradition follow closely-knit interpretative rules, like those governing kashrut, chametz and matsah. In regard to the bigger questions in life, like what legal and political shape human civilization should take as we move further into the age of information and globalization, decisions are not made in narrow legal terms but using the larger, more important, and less precisely defined terms of prophets, politicians, philosophers, mystics and artists. In these areas too, Jewish tradition unfolds with a certain inner logic of sacred intertexuality. But the principles are broad and dynamic; able to navigate the ever-changing world-space inhabited by humanity-in-evolution.

Human Rights

It was in such a larger world-space, opened up by modernity, that humanity awoke to the limitations of her previous identity structures. As our minds grew, the myths that we lived by became partially "transparent"[17]. We began to see *through* our identity-stories, to see the humanity of people who we had previously rejected; because they were not members, or not adherents, or not heterosexual or for other reasons. The recognition of these liberal humanistic truths is bedrock to what we know, at

16 I'll try to make clear how I think this works through teaching the source-texts for today's class.

17 My use of "transparency" is taken from Jean Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin.

our present stage of human development, is worthy of our faithfulness. The God that we know can only command that we honor the humanity that we see; yes, it was obscured before by the limitations of our stories, but now it is in broad view. Since I believe that the human rights project is the right response to our emergent ability to see human dignity where we could not before, I see human rights as bedrock to our most basic human moral responsibility and the standard to which we are held by God.

This way of thinking has important implications for the interpretative methodology at work in the Torah of human rights. Most importantly, it means that there is no attempt here to find sanction in Jewish texts for commitment to human rights. Once I accept human rights as basic to my human moral responsibility, I know that I must commit to them with the same knowledge that I know that there is a God. My belief in God, and my commitment to the human rights project, share the same root. That root is that I encounter things like love and justice that move me to service and worship. If you tell me that I should deny my commitment to justice in deference to God and religion, you're speaking a contradiction in terms. God and religion sit on the same branch as love, justice and morality. If I don't believe in these, then there is no God.

So it is important to understand that the exploration of Torah sources in this course does not involve looking for "textual support" for committing to human rights. That commitment is assumed at the outset. The exploration here has a very different goal: Assuming our commitment to human rights theory and praxis, we want to know what God reveals to Israel about the human rights project. By taking our place in sacred Jewish intertexuality, utilizing the languages of the prophet, the Talmud and the mystic, we seek to hear God speak to us on this subject now.

In light of the above conceptual considerations, I'll now give a brief overview of some of the themes that we will encounter in our Torah explorations. Spoiler alert: we'll return to these themes (in a somewhat different order) during the course.[18]

[18] Much of what follows overlaps my ebook Human Rights as Masiach: http://humanrightstheology.net/human-rights-as-mashiach-2/ For the links in the footnotes you'll need to download a copy (for free).

Basic Themes in the Torah of Human Rights

The Torah meaning of human rights as I understand it emerges by juxtaposing sacred texts and interpreting them in light of each other. This is a kind of Midrash. It involves a close reading of texts, but also seeking to understand themes selected from one text in light of themes from other texts. Midrash is both about discovering meanings and transforming them, as discussed above. We'll begin with the Rambam, who was the great medieval Jewish philosopher and legal scholar Rabbi Moses Maimonides. Here is his vision of redemption:

> **Laws of Judges 12:4-5 (based on Machon Mamrei's Mishneh Torah[19])**
>
> The sages and the prophets did not long for the days of the mashiach that Israel might exercise dominion over the world, or rule over the peoples, or be exalted by the nations, or that it might eat, drink and rejoice. Their longing was that Israel be free to devote itself to the Torah and its wisdom, with no one to oppress or disturb them, and thus be worthy of life in the world to come…
>
> In that era, there will be neither famine nor war, neither jealousy nor strife. Blessings will be abundant, comforts within the reach of all. The one occupation of the whole world will be to know God. Thus they will become greatly wise, and will know hidden and deep matters; grasping the knowledge of their Creator to the utmost capacity of the human mind, as it is written, (Isaiah 11:9), "[They will not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain] for the earth will be filled with the consciousness of God as the waters cover the sea."

Understanding this vision requires grasping a number of themes in the Rambam's writings. He envisions a world in which we as a species invest everything we've got in realizing our potential to be in the image of God. You are in the image of God for the Rambam if you are performing acts of loving-kindness and justice while contemplating the true nature of God's universe. The Rambam explains that the magnificent truth of the universe evokes love and awe, and in that state of mind, one is motivated to imitate God through acts of loving-kindness and justice. In truth, loving-kindness and justice, the Rambam sees the image - the reflection - of something worthy of worship. He calls that something "God", the Most High.[20]

19 The **Mishneh Torah** or "Repetition of the Law" is Maimonides' influential code of Jewish Law. The Machon Mamrei version is based on the Yemenite manuscripts and there are some differences between this version and the standard printed versions. The most important difference for our purposes is that in the standard printed versions it says that "Israel" will become "greatly wise", whereas in the manuscripts the word "Israel" does not appear. For a scholarly argument that the manuscripts are correct (and so the quote above without "Israel" in the second paragraph is correct) see Kellner, Menachem, "Translation and 'Improvement'" (Hebrew), appearing in **Bedarkei Shalom** (edited by Binyamin Ish Shalom), pgs. 255-263.

20 In various places, the Rambam defines being in the "image of God" as realizing the *intellectual ideal* (see **Mishneh Torah,** Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah, Chapter 4, Halacha 8; **Eight Chapters**, Chapter 5). He further says that when realizing that ideal, one is engulfed in *love and awe* (**Mishneh Torah**, Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah, Chapter 2, Halachot 1-2). Additionally, he says that one who realizes the intellectual ideal is motivated to imitate God through acts of *justice, loving-kindness and charity* (see the **Guide to the Perplexed** 3:54 and 1:54). I think that all of this - *truth, love, awe, justice, loving-kindness and charity, and how these guarantee world peace and justice* - must be taken into account in order to understand what the Rambam means by "intellect" and the "image of God". And so I said in the Rambam's name, "In truth, loving-kindness and justice, the Rambam sees the image - the reflection - of something worthy of worship. He calls that something God, the Most High".

For the Rambam, the God that is reflected in truth, loving-kindness and justice is the only true object of worship and allegiance. We serve God because ultimate value demands ultimate commitment[21]. Since God is reflected in human beings, and since imitating God means loving-kindness and justice, faithfulness to God means protecting and nurturing human beings. The ultimate goal is to cultivate humanity's potential to be in God's image, thus filling the world with the consciousness of God as the waters cover the seas.

Accomplishing this goal requires a suitable world order. For the Rambam, the Torah is God's blueprint for that order. It is the divine constitution for the government of the human species. The Rambam says that the Torah has two goals: "to mend the body of humanity" and "to mend the soul of humanity". Mending the body of humanity consists of eliminating oppression and guaranteeing all people the necessary conditions for dignified life such as housing, medicine and education. Mending the soul of humanity means engineering culture through education and spiritual practice so that it will produce people who are as wise, loving and just as they can be[22].

The Rambam accepts the traditional definition of the "mashiach" as the anointed king of Israel, but he transforms this usually supernatural ideal into part of his pragmatic this-worldly plan to establish the divine constitution as the world order. That means the just rule of law for all human beings. Everywhere people will live in states that protect them from oppression and cultivate their potential to be wise, loving and just. No human capacity to reflect God will be wasted. The mashiach is "this worldly" because the Rambam rejects the idea of a magical messiah who works miracles. The real mashiach effects change through pragmatic action. The final goal of the mashiach is mending the body and soul of all humanity through a just world order. That order will guarantee that we will not hurt nor destroy in all of God's earth so that we may come to grasp the consciousness of our creator to the utmost capacity of the human mind[23].

The Rambam completes his vision of redeemed humanity with a reference to Isaiah. I think his vision is a medieval philosophical midrash on Isaiah's ancient prophecy. Isaiah preached against a particular conception of idolatry that he characterized as a self-aggrandizing worship of power that went hand in hand with oppression of the weak.

21 It's clear that for the Rambam, the realized human serves God and the Law because of their intrinsic value and not in deference to authoritative tradition (see his **Commentary on the Mishnah,** Tractate Sanhedrin, "Perek Chelek")**.** Even as the concept of "intellect" is the key to understanding every aspect of Torah for the Rambam, he says in the Guide 1:71 that he did not receive any authoritative Jewish tradition about it. Intellect is what the Rambam autonomously recognizes as ultimate value (see note 4 above for my interpretation of "intellect"). And so I said above in the Rambam's name, "The God that is reflected in truth, loving-kindness and justice is the only true object of worship and allegiance. We serve God because ultimate value demands ultimate commitment."

22 See the **Guide to the Perplexed**, 2:40. It's clear from the context that the Rambam is talking about the human species in general and not the Jewish People in particular. For the application of his idea of the divine constitution to the Jewish People, see the **Guide to the Perplexed**, 3:27. Here (3:27) the Rambam offers the definitions of "mending the body and soul" that I used in the body of the text above.

23 For Rambam's discussion of the mashiach, see **Mishneh Torah,** Hilchot Melachim, Chapters 11-12. The Rambam envisioned an independent Jewish state in the Land of Israel as the center of the just world order to be established by the mashiach. While I don't identify with the Rambam's Israel-centric view of global justice, my own liberal-democratic version of Zionism draws heavily upon his ideas.

Isaiah 2:8 - 3:15

Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made…

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day…[He]…will enter into judgment with the elders of his people…

"For you have eaten up the vineyard!

The spoil of the poor is in your houses!

What mean you that you beat my people to pieces?!

and grind the faces of the poor?!"…

How did the Rambam interpret these words of Isaiah? I imagine that the Rambam read Isaiah like this: the idolaters grind the faces of the poor because their interests are more ultimate in their eyes than human beings. But God created humanity to reflect God's own truth, justice and loving-kindness and not to be fed as raw material into the strong man's machine. When the powerful take what they want because they can, and call that justice, they worship themselves and not the Most High. True allegiance to God means protecting life and eliminating injustice (mending the body) and cultivating humanity's higher potential (mending the soul). Allegiance to a political order that oppresses the weak is idolatry.

Isaiah envisioned a global order that would redeem humanity from idolatry and oppression and its heart would be Mount Moria, the Temple Mount, in Jerusalem. More than two thousand years later, Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn (1857 - 1935) read both Isaiah's vision and that of the Rambam in light of the fragile international organizations that existed between the two World Wars:

Malki Bakodesh, Part One, Question 2

Its not far out to think that this period [the establishment of modern Israel] is the one about which Isaiah prophesied (2:2) "In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord's house shall stand firm above the mountains, and tower above the hills, and all the nations shall stream towards it" …for Torah and for illumination…

and this is because in this House will be the Hall of Peace - but not like the Hall of Peace in the Hague, where the peace representatives bow down before the glory of those whose power casts its shadow over the world of life, and any hint that some ruler has done injustice is considered a rebellion.

And it will be more than the League of Nations established by the "father of national morality" President Wilson, which in any case has more good will than legal power, but rather it will be the "Court of Nations" which will judge the peoples in justice and the nations with righteousness…and the corrupted idea that nationalism justifies iniquity and evil will be banished, and there will be justice for every nation and for every individual, for each one has the right to develop in his own unique way, but without damaging his fellow, and there will be no more oppression…nation shall not take up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore…[24]

[24] Malki Bakodesh is R. Hirschensohn's great six-volume responsa on Jewish Law relating to the modern State of Israel and other contemporary issues. Here are links to the original printing and to David Zohar's new annotated edition.

In Rabbi Hirschensohn's vision, like in Isaiah, the Temple Mount is the center of the global rule of law. Like the Rambam, it's about this-worldly justice for all human beings without miracles. But with no magical messiah, what could enforce the rule of Rabbi Hirschensohn's Court of Nations in the real world? Rabbi Hirschensohn believed that mending the body and soul of humanity involves the slow evolution of human civilization. Global justice will be accomplished gradually as the families of the earth covenant between them upon ever higher standards of justice and civilization[25].

As civilization evolves towards a higher humanity, new standards of international law emerge. R. Hirschensohn argues that these standards are binding from the Torah. That makes theological sense because they are the vehicle for realizing God's plan to mend the body and soul of humanity.[26] But R. Hirschensohn also argues that international law is binding from the Torah in a legal sense. The legal obligation is grounded in "mitsvat dinim" or "the commandment of laws" which obligates all people to establish just legal systems[27]. International law is also binding because the Torah recognizes the binding power of covenants and treaties. Furthermore, the Rabbi argues, for the Jewish state to violate human dignity in contradiction to international law would be the worst possible desecration of God's name imaginable.[28]

But what if international law contradicts traditional Jewish law? Assuming that the international law in question increases justice rather than diminishes it, R. Hirschensohn says that according to the Torah, international law overrides Jewish law[29]. The background for this is the well established rabbinic principle that sometimes achieving the larger goals of God's Word requires overrides the letter of the law[30]. Since the sages are commanded to continually reinterpret Jewish law in light of

25 Unfortunately, R. Hirschensohn's writings have not been translated into English. An English summary of my doctoral research on R. Hirschensohn is available here. The full doctorate, **The Democratization of the Jewish Political Tradition – Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn's Political Thought and its Jewish Sources** (from here on abbreviated as "**Democratization**"), is available here (Hebrew). R. Hirschensohn talks about the importance of the evolution of civilization in many places. For example, see Malki Bakodesh, Volume 1, pg. 8 (original printing) or pg. 7 (David Zohar's edition) where he makes clear that democracy is the form of government necessitated by the present stage of civilization. Regarding international law and covenants, see below.

26 R. Hirschensohn believes that the most important thing that we know about God is that God seeks a this-worldly good life for human beings as understood, for instance, in the Rambam's concept of mending the body politic. One clear expression of this idea can be found in his early writings in a journal called **Hamisderonah** (Year 1, Number 9, Letter 821); I've extracted the relevant quotes and posted them here [Hebrew]). For an analysis of R. Hirschensohn's idea of the good that God wants for humanity, see **Democratization**, pg. 15ff [Hebrew].

27 **Democratization**, pg. 41.

28 See below vis-à-vis eliminating the seven nations.

29 R. Hirschensohn, **Eleh Divrei Habrit**, Vol. 1, pg. 69: "It is forbidden for Israel to violate international laws even if they contradict the laws of Israel". For more information about the R. Hirschensohn's idea of international law, and other Jewish sages that held similar positions, see Amos Israel-Vleeschhouwer's doctorate, **The Attitudes of Jewish Law Towards International Law: Analyzing the Jewish Legal Materials and Processes** [Hebrew]; and also: Amos Israel-Vleeschhouwer and Shaiya Rothberg, "International Law, the State and the Human Being in the Thought of Rabbi Chayim Hirschensohn" [Hebrew] (forthcoming).

30 While there exists a whole literature of traditional and critical studies about the role of human autonomy in Jewish law, the principle that sometimes God wants us to override the traditional halacha (Jewish law) is generally accepted. Menachem Elon, a former chief justice in Israel and a great scholar of Jewish law, sums it up like this (**Encyclopedia Judaica** 2cd Ed., "Takkanot"):

the advance of civilization, it is surely better to reinterpret rather than override. But if for whatever reason this is not done, it is international law that has greater Torah authority.

For example, the words "you shall not leave one soul alive" (Deut. 20:16) have traditionally been understood to command genocide against the seven nations of the Land of Israel if they refuse to vacate the land or accept slavery to the Jews. The Rambam rules that even though the seven nations no longer exist, if they did, we would be commanded to kill them even today: "anyone who meets one of them and doesn't kill him has violated a negative commandment as it is written, 'you will not leave one soul alive'" (Hilchot Shoftim 5:4). R. Hirschensohn, breaking rank with most authorities, argues that this was an ancient military tactic and that today there is no such commandment. This is an example of reinterpreting the law rather than overriding it. But even if you think Jewish law does command genocide, says R. Hirschensohn, you are still obligated from the Torah to respect international law that prohibits it. When international law represents a new and higher standard of human civilization, it trumps Jewish law from the Torah itself[31].

On this basis, I believe that international human rights law, as covenanted upon by the families of the earth in the aftermath of the Holocaust, is absolutely binding from the Torah and generally overrides laws that contradict it. In the spirit of the Rambam, I define "mashiach" as the this-worldly force that moves humanity closer to the kingdom of God. In our generation, I think that's the global movement for human rights. Human rights are the key both to the well being of the Jewish state and to the well being of humanity as a whole.

I believe that a global order guaranteeing human rights is the foundation for the kingdom of God. Why the *foundation* rather than the kingdom itself? Here again I'm following the Rambam. His vision goes beyond even the most expansive interpretation of human rights. His divine constitution involves exploring the farther reaches of human nature through investing in higher culture and mindfulness training. Only then can we test the boundaries of how wise, loving and just human

> Halakhic legislation generally functions with two principal objectives:
> (1) to fill a lacuna in the law created in consequence of changed social and economic realities and the emergence of problems which find no answer in the existing *halakhah*; in this event the *takkanah* generally serves to add to the existing *halakhah*;
> (2) to amend and vary the existing *halakhah* to the extent that this is dictated by the needs of the hour…
> These two objectives are pursued by legislation, whether *takkanah* or *gezerah*, in all the different fields of the *halakhah* – certain areas whereof are wholly founded on such legislation while in other areas its influence is felt to a greater or lesser degree. The latter phenomenon is largely a reflection of the extent to which it proved possible to resort to interpretation (*midrash*) for a solution to the problems that arose. In seeking the solution to a problem that arose the scholars had recourse, first and above all, to the legal source of interpretation, since by so doing the solution would be forthcoming from scriptural passages or from existing *halakhah*. Only when interpretation was not a means to a solution did the scholars resort to *takkanah* – which represented an innovation in the world of the *halakhah*…

[31] R. Hirschensohn, **Eleh Divrei Habrit**, Vol. 1, pg. 69ff. I posted some selections from R. Hirschensohn's discussion of this subject, together with English translations, here.

beings can be. In such a world order, consecrated to mending the body and the soul of humanity, I see the kingdom of God.

Let's pause and take a look at the interpretative methodology that we've been using. I presented a number of themes in the Rambam, Isaiah and R. Hirschensohn. While I expressed these themes in a way calculated to emphasize the points important for this presentation, at the same time I tried to remain faithful to what it says in the texts. But I was highly selective about which themes were included.

For example, I presented Isaiah's vision of global justice as the pinnacle of the Rambam's divine constitution. But I ignored Isaiah's supernatural understanding of politics that is diametrically opposed to the Rambam's practical rationalism. And I read R. Hirschensohn's Court of Nations as the instrument for the Rambam's just world order. But R. Hirschensohn envisioned a global coalition of liberal democracies while the Rambam's ideal state would look something like today's Iran. So I ignored the form of government that the Rambam thought would lead to human perfection. What determines which themes get included and which left out?

As argued above, the religious truth of sacred text is always necessarily a form of *midrash*. What texts like the Five Books of Moses, Isaiah and the Rambam meant in historical context is not what religiously binds us. Both the Rambam and R. Hirschensohn explicitly taught us to interpret sacred text in this way. The Rambam understood scientific and philosophical truth, which he called "intellect", as the measure of all value. And so he directs us to interpret sacred text in light of that truth. If it looks like the simple meaning contradicts intellect (i.e. it says that God has a human body), then the interpreter must *struggle* with the text until she finds its true meaning; one that does not contradict intellect (i.e. God's "hand" symbolizes agency). Since the Rambam believes that God is reflected in philosophical truth, the religious meaning of the text will always be something he recognizes as philosophically true.[32]

Similarly, R. Hirschensohn teaches that if Jewish law and morality seem to contradict each other, we are either wrong about the law or about morality. He says that we must keep *struggling* with the text until we find a solution that is honestly compelling to us both as an interpretation of Jewish law and of morality. We saw an example of R. Hirschensohn's interpretative methodology vis-à-vis genocide and international law, above. Since R. Hirschensohn believes that God is reflected in his

[32] In Perek Helek (part of the Rambam's **Commentary on the Mishnah**, Tractate Sanhedrin), the Rambam says:

> "…when you encounter a word of the sages which seems to conflict with *intellect*, you will pause, consider it, and realize that this utterance must be a riddle or a parable. You will sleep on it, trying anxiously to grasp its logic and its expression, so that you many find its genuine *intellectual* intention and lay hold of a direct faith, as Scripture says: "To find out words of delight, and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth" (Eccles. 12:10).

Similarly, in the Guide to the Perplexed 2:25 he states says that if science had proven that the world is eternal and not created, in contradiction to the simple meaning of the Bible, he would have interpreted the Bible to say that the world is eternal because that is the intellectual truth and "the gates of figurative interpretation are not shut in our faces".

most compelling judgments about morality, the religious meaning of the text will always be something he recognizes as morally good.[33]

It's not that these two sages first decided what the texts meant and then read them. Rather, they read the texts as *coming from God*. When you know something about the person speaking to you, then you know in light of what to interpret her words. The Rambam and R. Hirschensohn know that God is the essence and source of *what they judge to be* truth and justice. And so, when they read *sacred tradition*, tradition whose meaning is consecrated to God, they assume what they know about those things. This is *midrash*: There is no false consciousness here. There's no bad historical claim about what these texts meant in the past. The Rambam and R. Hirschensohn read Jewish tradition in this way because they understood *the logic of religious truth*. They sought the meaning *that draws us closer to God*.

And so the supernatural politics of the historical Isaiah do not bind us religiously. In the world that we know, ignoring military and international realities would lead to terrible suffering and destruction. And while we can understand why the 12th century Rambam believed in theocratic monarchy, today we see in such regimes horrific oppression and corruption. The true religious meaning of sacred text *always stands in relation to what we understand* as truth, love and justice. The words that we interpret as *coming from God* can never teach us false, immoral or destructive things. Just as the logic of religious truth dictated that the Rambam reinterpret Isaiah, so too we must reinterpret the Rambam today.

With eyes set on the God of truth, loving-kindness and justice - the God in whose image were created all the members of our species - we must face broken humanity. We don't need authoritative tradition to recognize the depravity of a world order that squanders the lives of billions of human beings. It is absolutely clear that faithfulness to God requires that we enact "the human covenant" as necessitated by *mitsvat dinim* (God's commandment to all peoples to establish the just rule of law). Human rights are already halfway to being that covenant and at present this project is the best candidate to succeed.

And therefore, human rights are *mashiach* (the practical this-worldly force for human redemption). Sure in that knowledge, I turn to the sources of my religious inspiration to seek answers: What does the Torah teach about this project? How should I think about human rights in light of Jewish theology and law? What I already know about truth, justice and love helps me choose the themes and figure out how to put them together. I am struck first by the clarity and force of the Rambam:

[33] In one place (**Malki Bakodesh**, Vol. 4, pg. 10), R. Hirschensohn sums it up like this:

> We must consider all things in light of morality and reason, and that which we find *kosher* and upright and established in relation to these two foundations, we then look into the *halacha* [Jewish law] – that all its paths are paths of pleasantness and its ways are peace (Prov. 3:17) – for the *halacha* never contradicts something with is upright and true in regard to morality and reason, and if we find [what seems to be a] contradiction, then we must struggle in study until we find that…either we don't understand the *halacha*, or we don't understand morality….

since God is reflected in perfected humanity, faithfulness to God means perfecting humanity. But it is Isaiah's vision of the House of God on the Temple Mount that carries the weight of the prophet's cry to protect the widow, the orphan and the alien. And it was in R. Hirschensohn that the attempts at the international rule of law, made between the World Wars, resonated so deeply with the words of Isaiah and the Rambam. In these sources, I hear answers to the questions that we face.

In this spirit, there is one more sacred text that I want to address: the Holy Zohar, the bible of Kabbalah. Now, the historical meaning of this text is arguably ethnocentric to the extreme. But as stated above, religious truth dictates the worship of God and not history. The *religious truth* of the Zohar transcends its historical limitations. The Zohar has something vital to teach us about human rights. It comes to teach us how they involve God's mystery and glory.

You may think that we human beings own the name "humanity". But the Zohar teaches that humanity is bigger than we are. One of the most important symbols in the Zohar is constituted by three Hebrew letters: *Aleph, Dalet and Mem* or ADAM. (I'm spelling ADAM in all-capitals to emphasize that this is a mystical symbol and not a regular word.) The word "adam" in Hebrew can be translated as "humanity". And this meaning will be part of what I want to learn from the Zohar about human rights. But what does ADAM symbolize in the Zohar itself? The meaning of the Zohar is always a matter of poetic interpretation. So I won't try to offer a linear definition of ADAM. Instead, I'll introduce some of the meanings of this symbol that shed light on how exploring the mystery and glory of God is tied up with human rights.

Let's begin with Genesis. In the Garden of Eden, "Adam" is the man married to Eve. But in Genesis 5:2, "adam" is the name of both the first man *and* the first woman, as it is written, "...male and female God created them, and blessed them, and called *their* name adam". With this as background, let's approach some of what the Zohar says about ADAM. The Zohar says that ADAM is "the loving relation between male and female[34]". The Zohar further says that ADAM is "the face to face relation" and "the embrace of giving and receiving". If we take all these phrases together, then it seems that one thing that ADAM symbolizes is the capacity of human beings to love and nurture each other. This capacity, displayed in the myriad forms of loving human relationships, enables our species to survive and flourish. And it is essential to what makes us human beings. And thus,

[34] There's no question that the Zohar's thinking about gender and sexuality has the potential to be oppressive. Some of the most reactionary currents in Jewish culture are associated with the Zohar. However, I think that there's also something radical and subversive in the Zohar's take on sex and gender, men and women, and how these relate to God. I believe that if we read the Zohar right it can shed much light on human sexuality, oppression and liberation. Like all sacred texts, the Zohar needs to be liberated from its historical limitations in order to liberate us. Vis-à-vis "male and female", we must be careful not to confuse them with men and women. In the Zohar, all men and all women are *both male and female*. And thus, "the loving relation between male and female" is not limited to heterosexual relationships (or even to sexual relationships). If we are to treat the Zohar as a sacred text, we must read it in light of the truth: Anyone with a clear mind can see the beauty and goodness of God in loving relationships all across the spectrum: hetero, homo, queer, post, trans or whatever. And so the loving and life-giving dynamic of ADAM, the Image of God, includes - and is manifest in - all of them.

ADAM, which also means "humanity" as mentioned above, seems like a good symbol to symbolize our ability to love each other, and to be fruitful and multiply.[35]

But the loving and life-giving dynamic of ADAM did not begin with human beings. The Zohar teaches that

> …before God fashioned God's self [into the form of ADAM]…the worlds could not endure, and all those worlds were destroyed. Why? Because ADAM had not been established; for the wholeness of the form of ADAM contains all things, and all things find their place in it.[36]

In this myth of creation, the Zohar tells of worlds that God created before our world. But these pre-creation creations could not endure. God needed *to transform God's self* into the form of ADAM in order to create a sustainable universe. God had to realize the divine potential for "the loving relation", "the face to face relation" and "the embrace of giving and receiving" in order for the world to survive. After taking on the form of ADAM, God created the world in God's image (the image of ADAM) and only then could creation endure. And so the Zohar also calls ADAM "the balance of the cosmic scales" that sustains all existence. That reminds me of the *balance* of positive and negative energy in the atoms that make up the material world; and of the *balance* of gravitational forces that hold our planet at just the right distance from the sun. These, like the loving embrace and the face to face relation, manifest God's creative power. ADAM is like a divine pulse responsible for all life and existence; or like enchanted music that God brought forth from within God's self and then played aloud in order to animate the world.

We are called "the children of ADAM" (bnei ADAM) because ADAM is God's form and we are created in God's image. Our capacity to love and nurture manifests "the balance of the scales" that sustains the world. When we cultivate our capacity to be wise, loving and just, we touch on the mystery of God's own self and the purpose of creation. God called us "ADAM", "humanity", not to supply us with a proper name but *to reveal the purpose of our species*. We exist in order to be *human:* to embody as much of ADAM as we can, and thus to be in God's image and to help repair and sustain the world. Paradoxically, the more *human* that we become, the more we are like God. We cannot fathom how close to God humanity could become, because everywhere she is broken and abused. Faithfulness to God means perfecting humanity. And in the progress towards that goal, the glory of God is ever more revealed.

In our time, we have witnessed the rise of a *human* discourse of responsibility that is spreading across the globe. Even as she is malnourished and downtrodden, the inner eye of humanity has glimpsed the magnificence of a global order of human rights. Will that glimpse vanish under the

35 "The face to face relation" and "the balance of the scales" (a phrase which I will introduce in a moment) are from the opening of the Sifra Detsiuta (Zohar Terumah 2:176b); "the loving relation between male and female" and "giving and receiving" are from the Hakdama of the Zohar (1:13b).

36 Idra Rabba (Zohar Naso 3:135a-b)

burden of poverty and oppression? Will the countenance of humanity be forced back to the floor by famine, indifference and tyranny? Or might the spirit of God, still hovering over the deep, arouse our species to grip on hard and drag itself up the ladder to a higher stage of evolution? The book is open and the hand writes…it chronicles the unfinished story of the human race in our generation.